A LIFE OF THE REVEREND

RICHARD BAXTER

1615-1691

by

FREDERICK J. POWICKE

M.A., PH.D.

RICHARD BAXTER was one of the most prominent nonconformists of the seventeenth century, best known, perhaps, as the author of "The Saints' Everlasting Rest" and "A Call to the Unconverted."

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RICHARD BAXTER 1615-1691

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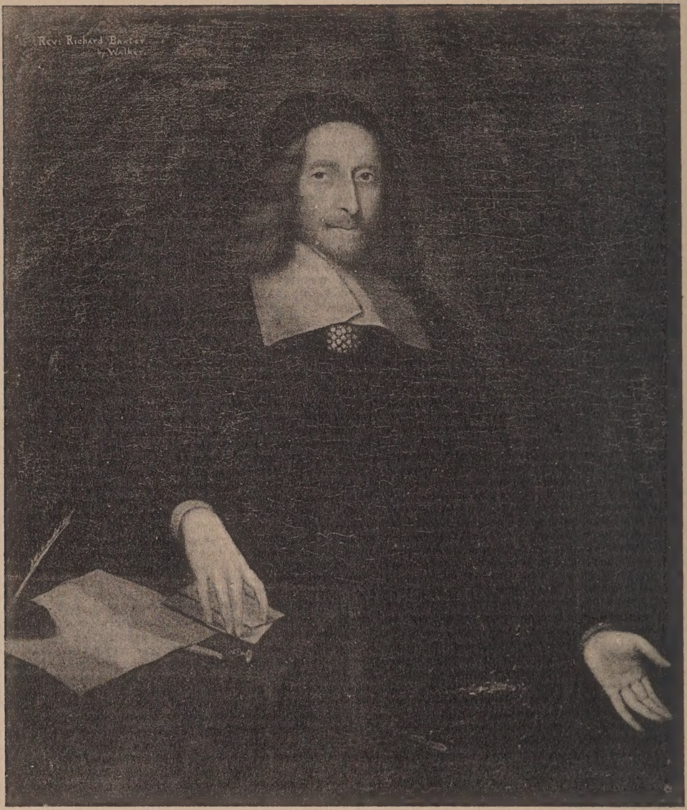

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From a painting by Robert Walker

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

MADE & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BUTLER & TANNER LTD
LONDON

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PREFACE

It will be seen at once that much the greater part of this book is taken up with the period (1641–60) which covers Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster; and for this I may plead several reasons.

(1) Baxter himself regarded that ministry as the chief work of his life. He might be a writer, and his writings might engage most of his time. After 1662 they engaged nearly all his time. But they never held the first place in his esteem. He was always, in the first place, a pastor. Whatever else he did was done in that capacity. Nothing, in his view, could be of higher importance than the functions which belonged to the ministerial office. Nothing seemed to him more calamitous than the law which silenced him. Nothing in his memory shone with so grateful a light as the time when, year after year, he was free to spend himself in speech and life among the three or four thousand common folk of his parish. Moreover, though he thought none too highly of his own success, it was to this he owed the reputation which opened the way, on all sides, to his written words.

(2) The amount of space given to the Kidderminster period by his biographers, Calamy, Orme, etc., is very small in proportion to that occupied by the rest of his life – especially the last twenty years. These, of course, are full of interest from the point of view of Baxter's close connection with the stream of events which immediately preceded and followed the great Disruption. There was none who suffered more keenly than he at the prospect of it, or laboured with greater persistence, even after it, to unite men in a middle way conducive to peace; or drew upon him so many poisoned arrows from the bigots of both extremes. His story, indeed, leads deep into the heart of things, from the days of delusive hope in 1660 to the dawn of a real day for liberty and justice in 1689. No wonder, therefore, that his biographers have chosen to linger around it. I have by no means escaped the attraction, as perhaps a second volume may show.

(3) And another excuse for brief treatment of the Kidderminster years may have been the apparent lack of material, beyond that contained in the twenty or so pages of Baxter's

own account. If so, I have been deprived of this excuse by the fact of finding a considerable quantity of supplementary material in the Baxter MSS. of Dr Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London. The existence of these has been no secret. They have long been known, and, to some small extent, have been used. But thirteen folio volumes of close writing, often not easy to decipher, and quite as often concerned with things utterly dead and done with, may well have seemed rather a forbidding task; nor do I pretend to have had either the time or the will to explore the whole mass. I have simply looked it through with more or less care; and have been able to do this because the Librarian, Rev R. Travers Herford, with his wonted courtesy, besides giving me free access to the MSS. on the spot, obtained the consent of the Trustees to my use of them under the care of Dr. Guppy, the Chief Librarian at the Rylands Library, Manchester. The results have been gratifying – though some are outside the scope of this volume. But for my present purpose, it has been gratifying, e.g. – after a vain search elsewhere – to come across the original parchment certificate of Baxter's ordination at Worcester as 'Deacon' and the license granted him to teach at Dudley, in 1638; also, the correspondence relating to his first settlement at Kidderminster, and the renewed 'call' – with 200 or 300 signatures attached – which introduced his second period; also, the precise reason of his sudden departure to London in April 1660, and letters from his anxious yet proud Kidderminster friends occasioned by his absence; also, his last letter to them in 1681 – as well as scores of other letters which made it easy for me to write the chapter on the wide circle of his correspondents. Such items of new information could not fail to add unexpected light and fullness to the narrative.

(4) But, after all, the true genesis of the book lies in the fact that I happen to have been born at Kidderminster; that my earliest associations were with the Church which bears Baxter's name; and that from childhood, I was taught to think of him as constituting the town's peculiar glory. Certainly I did not realize this at first. Before July 25, 1875, Baxter was little more than a name to me. But on that day, as I stood just behind Dean Stanley at the unveiling of the statue raised to his

memory in the Bull Ring, and listened to the little great Dean's eloquent eulogy, the personality of the man came home to me. It seemed as if the stone figure, with its uplifted hand, was somehow instinct with a living spirit – a *genius loci* – calling to men, as long ago he did in St. Mary's, to choose the better part. With this feeling I began to read him and learn all I could about him. I have been reading him and learning about him ever since; and hence came the desire – to present him in the framework of his Kidderminster life – of which this book is the very imperfect fulfilment. Nor can I help setting down the conviction that in Baxter the Pastor – which includes Preacher – a modern pastor may still find the richest possible incentive to all that is best and highest in his vocation, whatever may be the width of his difference from Baxter the Theologian.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Rev W. G. D. Fletcher, M.A.—Vicar of Oxon, Shrewsbury, and Editor of the *Shropshire Archæological Society's Transactions*—for leave to reproduce, in abbreviated form, the Baxter pedigree published by him in the 1923 volume; and also the Rev H. W. Turner, B.A., of Wilmslow, for his kind service in preparing the index.

October, 1924. FRED. J. POWICKE.

NOTE TO THE PORTRAIT

1

THERE are several portraits of Baxter.

The latest, and least pleasing, is one found before some copies of *A Call to the Unconverted*–which presents him as holding in his right hand (with a skull just beneath) a small clasped Bible. It is obviously (except for the skull) a bad rendering of the '*vera effigies*', first prefixed to the *Life of Faith*, (1670)–*ætat.* 55. This is the conventional portrait, and may very well have answered to its name (*vera*[1]) at the time it was made. It brings out clearly the 'sad, sincere eyes', the high Roman nose, the lean cheeks, the firm, thin lips, the ample brow partly concealed by a skull-cap from which the hair falls down, in what was called 'lovelocks', upon his ministerial white band and black robe.

2

Another and earlier portrait is in the National Portrait Gallery, and has been reproduced in Vol. i, p. 485, of Firth's Edition of Macaulay's *History of England.* It shows Baxter, I think, in the early sixties (after his marriage in September 1662)–sad and somewhat worn, but very placid.

We note that here the beard has been reduced to a tuft between the lower lip and the chin.[2]

3

But in the portrait bequeathed to Baxter Church, Kidderminster, by the Rev Benjamin Fawcett (1715–80), and a treasured possession there, the beard, though short, is full. Here the expression is rather anxious as well as sad, and may point to the troubled time about 1660. It is certainly a younger face than No. 2.

4

Younger still is the fine portrait which hangs in the Reading-room of Dr Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London. I should refer it to the period (perhaps the last years of his ministry) when he had no great occasion for sadness, and his health was comparatively good. The eyes are nearer smiling than sadness; the cheeks are not worn; and the beard has not yet been allowed to grow.

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[1] It is suggestive of this that *Sylvester* retained it for the *Reliquiae* (1696).

[2] Often described as an 'Imperial', since Napoleon III (1856). It appears in the 'vera effigies' and seems never to have been discontinued.

5

This last point is characteristic, also, of a very different portrait, an heirloom [1] in the family of the Standerwicks of Broadway, Somersetshire – faithful Nonconformists since Richard Standerwick laid out money for the 'Puritan Immigrants' of New England in 1632 and later. His grand-nephew, William Standerwick, – it is said, – an 'intimate friend of Richard Baxter', had the portrait painted by his commission. But there is a difficulty. William Standerwick died in 1716, and the date of his birth is not given. If, however, we suppose him to have been born about 1640, he can hardly have become the intimate friend of Baxter before 1660, in which case his commission for the portrait would be later than that, whereas this is, without doubt, a likeness of Baxter as a comparatively young man, younger even than No. 4.

6

Is there any portrait of him at a still earlier age? I had never heard of one; but two years ago I visited Rous Lench Court, near Evesham, in the company of my old and dear friend Mr Peter Adam, J.P., of Kidderminster, by whose interest with the owner and occupier, Mr H. E. Chafy, we enjoyed the privilege of his personal conduct through, and around, that beautiful mansion; and, in the drawing-room, what at once arrested attention was a portrait of Baxter – manifestly different from the 'conventional': in fact, that of a young divine not much more than thirty, grave but not sad, and aristocratic to the tips of his long, tapering fingers. A nearer view disclosed the name of the Painter – that of Robert Walker (d. 1658), chief Painter to the Parliamentary party during the

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[1] Reproduced in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. ii, pp. 418, 419 (1905–6).

Commonwealth, whose portrait of Oliver Cromwell (now in the National Gallery) was pronounced by John Evelyn (1620–1706), the Diarist, to be the truest representation of Cromwell which he knew. Walker painted, also, Ireton, Lambert, Fleetwood, Serjeant, Keeble, and his rival artist, William Faithorne, the elder.[1] His home was in London, his circle of friends was one to which Baxter would naturally be introduced when he came up on a visit to his friend Colonel Sylvanus Taylor in the early summer of 1646, and it was then – I imagine – that Walker was requested, or asked leave, to paint the handsome young minister whose fame as a preacher was already beginning to spread abroad. Mr Chafy was good enough to let a photograph of the painting be taken; and so the reader can judge for himself. But to authenticate its genuineness beyond reasonable doubt, he has written as follows in answer to my enquiries:

'The portrait of Baxter which hangs in the drawing-room here was left to me by my father, the Rev Dr Chafy. I fancy he purchased it many years ago and gave a large sum for it . . . the only thing I know about it is, that it was formerly part of the Reynolds Russell collection. Several experts have seen it from time to time, and all agree that it is authentic and original . . . I think you can certainly state' this. 'Dr Chafy was very careful over such matters, and would not make statements without proper authority'.

There is surely a notable appropriateness in the fact that this portrait should be in the house from which Baxter went up to London in 1646 – the house to which he returned within a few weeks – the house where, the mere wreck of himself, he wrote the best part of his best-known book, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, and slowly recovered strength under the devoted care of Sir Thomas and Lady Rous. From Rous Lench he went straight to Kidderminster for his second ministry, and there are hints in his letters that it continued to be a second home, in which he was always welcome, as long as Sir Thomas and his Lady lived.

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[1] Besides the Baxter MSS. my chief source has been Baxter's books, and, of course, his autobiography, the 'Reliquiæ Baxterianæ' (1696), cited as *R.B.*
D. N. B.=Dictionary of National Biography.

We may add to the impression of the portraits Sylvester's description of him in later life: 'His Person was tall and slender and stooped much, his countenance composed and grave, somewhat inclining to smile, and he had a piercing eye'. – 'Funeral Sermon', p. 16 (at the end of *R.B.*).

INTRODUCTORY

RICHARD BAXTER was born on November 12, 1615, at Rowton in the parish of High Ercall, some ten miles east of Shrewsbury. Rowton was the home of his mother, Beatrice Adeney or Adney, who belonged to an old yeoman family. She had married 'Richard Baxter, of Eaton Constantine, Gentleman'[1] on January 29, 1614–15. As she was baptized at High Ercall Church on June 7, 1594, her age at marriage would not be more than twenty-one[2]; and, as her husband was baptized at Sutton Maddock on October 21, 1582,[3] he was in his thirty-third year, or about twelve years older. This disposes of the supposition that Baxter was the child of parents 'well-stricken in years'. November 12, 1615, was a Sunday, and Richard's baptism took place at High Ercall on the 19th, the Sunday following.[4] Why he and his mother lived at Rowton, apart (it would seem) from the father, we are not told. There is, however, the hint of an explanation in the fact that the estate at Eaton Constantine had become 'entangled' by his father's as well as his grandfather's gambling debts. But, if so, there came a change for the better: 'it pleased God' (says Baxter) 'to instruct and change my father'. Accordingly, mother and son rejoined him in the ancestral home[5] at Eaton Constantine; and his father turned out to be his best teacher. At High Ercall he had been under four ignorant men – two of them also 'immoral in their lives'; and Eaton Constantine brought no improvement, so far as the Church-schooling was concerned.[6] But his father, though no scholar, taught him so

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[1] For what is known of the Baxter pedigree, see Appendix I.

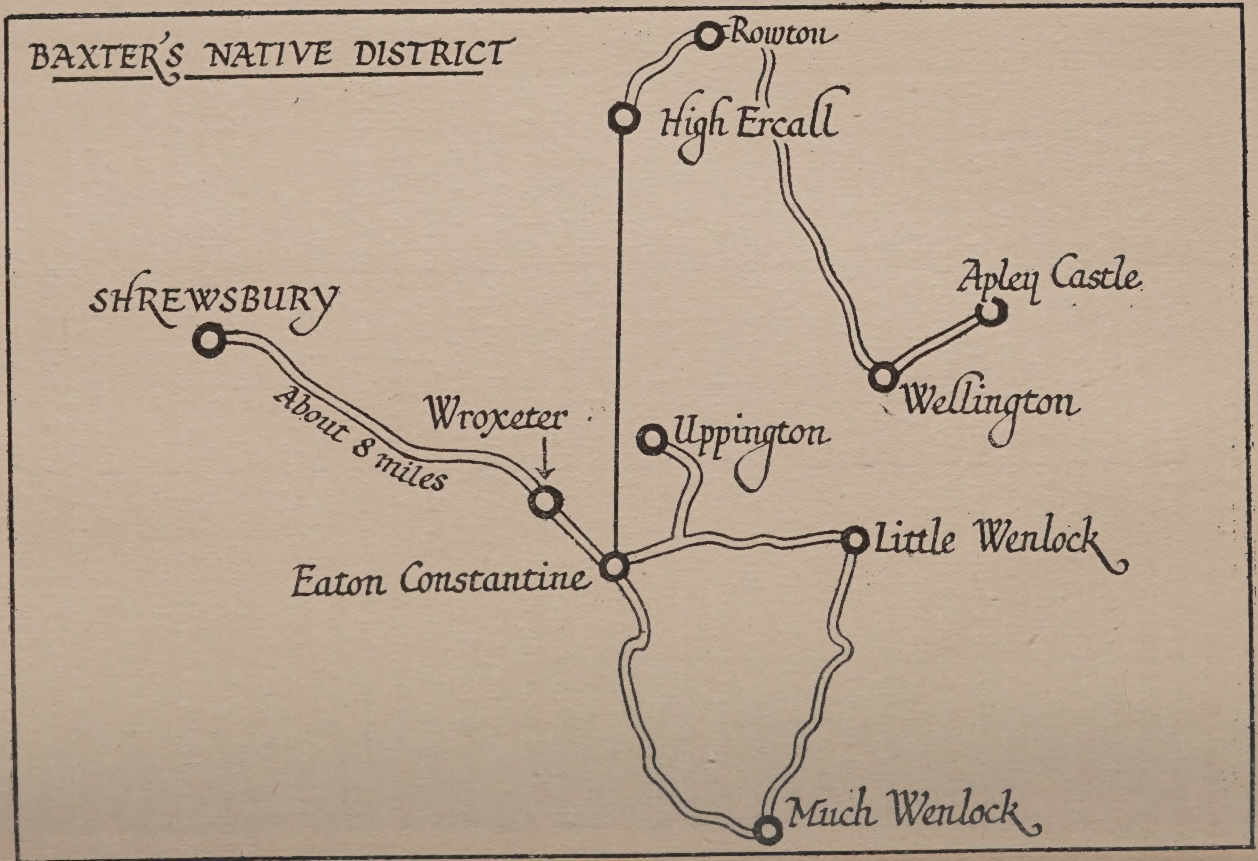
[2] 'Salop Archæological Society', vol. xii (new series), p. 302.

[3] See Appendix I.

[4] The entry in the Church Register is—'Richard sonne and heyer of Richard Baxter, of Eaton Constantine, gent, and of Beatrice his wife, baptized the xix of November 1615' – 'Salop Archæological Society', *ut supra*. Orme, therefore (*Life of Baxter*, p. i) is mistaken in saying that the Church Register gives November 6 as the date of baptism.

[5] See Appendix I. It has not greatly changed as to its exterior and some of the rooms. But it no longer looks out on the village green where dancing round a Maypole disturbed, for Baxter, Senr., the Sabbath calm.

[6] 'I was in my childhood first bred up under the School and Church teaching of eight several men of whom only two preached once a month and the rest were


BAXTER'S NATIVE DISTRICT
Rowton
High Ercall
Apley Castle
Wellington
SHREWSBURY
About 8 miles
Wroxeter
Uppington
Little Wenlock
Eaton Constantine
Much Wenlock

to read the Bible as to acquire a love for it, a benefit which ever afterwards he recalled with gratitude. Near the beginning of his fifteenth year he was placed under Mr John Owen, master of the Donnington Free School in the parish of Wroxeter. Owen had the confidence of his patron Sir Richard Newport,[1] of High Ercall Hall, who entrusted to him his own two boys – Francis and Andrew, the former about five years younger than Baxter. Another pupil, near the same age as Francis Newport, was Richard Allestree, son of Sir Richard's steward, and born at Uppington, a mile or two north-east of Eaton Constantine. Young Allestree lived to prove himself an ardent Royalist, and even a fighter for the king[2]; an Oxford Doctor of Divinity; a Canon of Christ Church, and a Provost of Eton. At Donnington School he proved himself so quick to learn that Mr Owen soon 'set him up into the lower end of the highest form', of which Baxter 'had long been chief'. This was more than the older boy could stand, and he 'talkt of leaving the school', whereupon he received one of his earliest lessons in self-control. Mr Owen gravely, but very tenderly, rebuked his pride; and gave him for a theme, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*'.[3]

Baxter's strong desire was to pass from Wroxeter to one of the Universities, but, when the time of decision came, his master 'drew him into another way' by persuading him 'to accept the offer' of Mr Richard Wickstead, Chaplain to the Council at Ludlow, who was on the outlook for 'a scholar fit for the University, and, having but one, would be better to him than any Tutor in the University could be'. This proposal won the warm support of his parents, 'who were willing to have' him 'as near to them as possible, having no children

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but Readers of the Liturgie and most of very scandalous lives'. – *A Treatise of Episcopacy* (1681), Preface, p. i.

[1] Created Baron Newport by Charles I in 1643.

[2] He seems to have been present, in that capacity, at the battle of Kineton Field, or Edgehill, on October 22, 1642.

[3] In the Preface to *R.B.* is a letter of Allestree's to Baxter, in answer to one from the latter remonstrating with him for (apparently) giving credence and countenance to a baseless slander against Baxter. This was written on December 8, 1679, from London (see Baxter MSS. (letters), vol. ii. f. $235^{ab.}$); and Allestree made prompt answer on the 13th from 'Eaton Colledge' – the answer of a Christian gentleman.

but' himself. But Mr Wickstead proved something of a fraud. While ready to 'speak much for learning', he really cared but little for it; and thought more of pleasing 'the Great Ones', than of doing his duty by his pupil. However, says Baxter, he 'loved me', and 'allowed me Books and Time enough'; so that, though he had no 'considerable helps', neither had he any 'considerable hindrances' from him. Baxter lived at Ludlow Castle a year and a half; and, in looking back, was thankful to have come out of its fiery temptations unscathed – a deliverance partly due to the influence of 'one intimate companion' unnamed, who alas! within 'two years', himself made moral shipwreck.[1]

The Castle was the seat of the Lord President of Wales; but the Lord President (the Earl of Bridgwater) was not in residence during Baxter's time.

Had the young Puritan been there a year longer (1634) he might have seen, in the Castle's stately Banqueting Hall,[2] the performance of 'a Cavalier Masque' (*Comus*) composed by another young Puritan.[2] Whether the severe moral beauty of the poem would have reconciled him to its dramatic setting is a question. Certainly he was not yet the scrupulous Puritan he became, else he would not have entertained even the thought (after a three months' interval at home)[3] of yielding to Mr Wickstead's counsel, 'to lay by all' his Preparations for the Ministry and 'to go to London and get acquaintance at Court and get some Office, as being the only rising way'. As it was, he consented – again partly to please his parents – to stay at Whitehall with Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, whose younger brother George had likewise tried the 'painted pleasures of a Court life'. The latter faced the experiment for years on and off before turning to the Ministry of the Church. But a month was enough for Baxter. 'When' – he says – 'I saw a Stage-Play instead of a sermon on the Lord's day in the afternoon, and saw what course was there in fashion, and heard little Preaching but what was, as to one part, against the Puritans, I was glad to be gone'. A good reason for his going was a message from his mother who had fallen 'ill' and desired his return.[1] The time was 'about Christmas day', 1632, just 'when the greatest snow began that hath been in this Age, which continued thence till Easter, at which time some places had it many yards deep'. One of these places was Kidderminster; where 'The Town, being in want of fire, went all to shovel the way over the Heath to *Stone-bridge*, from whence their coals come; and so great and sudden a storm of snow fell, as overwhelmed them; so that some perished in it, and others saved their lives by getting into a little cote that standeth on the Heath, and others scaped home with much ado'.

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[1] 'The last I heard of him was, that he was grown a Fudler and Railer at strictness'. The story is recorded, perhaps, as an example of what may happen in the case of one whose religion contains more heat than light. I 'had more knowledge than he' – says Baxter – 'but a colder heart'. – *R.B.* Pt. I, p. 4.

[2] See Bishop Jayne's 'excerpt from *R. B.*', p. 163. He notices, also, the traditional connection of the author of *Hudibras* with the Castle as secretary to the Earl of Carbery (in 1661 and 1662) – husband of the young lady Alice Egerton, who 'had been the star of' *Comus*. Butler 'is supposed to have written portions of *Hudibras* in a little room over the entrance gateway'.

[3] During which he acted, at Lord Newport's request, for Mr Owen, his old schoolmaster, who was 'sick' of the 'consumption' from which he died.

In May 1635 his Mother died, and a year or so later his father married again, this time Mary, the daughter of Sir Thomas Hunkes, who lived to the age of ninety-six; and spent her last years in Baxter's house; and was regarded by him with extraordinary reverence.[2] For four years (1634–8) he lived at home working for his father and carrying on his studies, but much hindered by the miserable state of his health. 'From the age of 21 till near 23 my weakness was so great that I expected not to live above a year'. This it was which drew him decisively to the ministry. 'My own soul being under serious apprehension of the Matters of another World, I was exceeding desirous to communicate those Apprehensions to such ignorant, presumptuous, careless sinners as the World aboundeth with'.

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[1] He had made one acquaintance (at least) in London whom he was sorry to part from – viz. – Humphrey Blunden, a bookseller's apprentice who achieved fame later as 'an extraordinary Chymist'; and also as agent in the translation and printing of Jacob Boehme's books. Through him Baxter 'afterwards' got his information about new books as well as the books themselves.

[2] It is strange that he does little more than mention his own Mother; while of his step-mother he says: her 'holiness, mortification, contempt of the World and fervent Prayer (in which she spent a great part of her life) have been so exceeding exemplary, as made a Special blessing to our Family, an Honour to Religion and an honourable Pattern to those that knew her' (*R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 12).

Mrs Baxter's mother, Lady Hunkes, was a sister of Lord Conway's mother, and, in virtue of this slight connection, we find the Lord of Ragley (May 24, 1656) addressing Baxter as 'my much esteemed cousin' (Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, f. 379^{ab}).

For some time, conscious of his deficiencies, he hesitated. What checked him most of all, at first, was his 'want of Academical Honours and Degrees'; and it is significant of the value attached to these by the prevailing opinion that he felt as if without them he would be 'contemptible with the most'. But the call seemed too clear to be silenced. 'A thirsty desire of Mens conversion and salvation', an awareness of 'some competent persuading Faculty of Expression which fervent Affections might help to actuate', and a conviction of his fast-approaching death, combined to beat down all reasons to the contrary. He 'resolved that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would easily recompense all the dishonour which for want of Titles' he 'might undergo from men'. But, indeed, he felt sure of more than one or two. How could men, unless candidates for Bedlam, possibly refuse to heed the 'unquestionable reasons' which he had to urge, and meant to urge with all his might, for turning from sin to God? 'I was so foolish as to think that I had so much to say, and of such convincing evidence for a Godly Life, that men were scarce able to withstand it: not considering what a blind and senseless Rock the Heart of an obdurate sinner is, and that old *Adam* is too strong for young *Luther* (as he said)'.

His decision to be a preacher raised the question of conformity or non-conformity, in the sense of subscribing or non-subscribing all the contents of the Book of Common Prayer. Practically he had always been a conformist. He had never known any, even among so-called Puritans, who were not—until 'at about 20 years of age' he became acquainted with some 'very zealous godly nonconformists in Shrewsbury' who, for certain departures from the prescribed order of worship, were 'prosecuted by the Bishops'. It was the fact of such men being so treated for a fault of no great consequence that created 'much prejudice' in him against their troublers. But then he asked himself, is the prejudice just? May not the Bishops have right on their side? And to answer that question he had set himself to 'study the point'.[1] The result, on the whole, had been favourable to conformity – so much so that now 'when' he 'thought of ordination' he 'had no scruple at all against Subscription'. His study, however, as he afterwards came to see, had been somewhat onesided. For what he had read on the Nonconformist side was by no means a statement of its best reasons. Moreover, he was 'so precipitant and rash that he never once read over the Book of Ordination . . . nor half read the Book of Homilies nor exactly weighed the Book of Common Prayer', nor applied his understanding to the articles. 'But my Teachers and my Books having caused me, in general, to think the conformists had the better cause, I kept out all particular scruples by that opinion.'

No doubt his eagerness to be at work acted strongly as a latent motive for compliance; and another motive was the opportune opening of a door.

'At that time old *Mr Richard Foley* of *Stourbridge* in *Worcestershire*, had recovered some alienated lands at *Dudley*, which had been left to charitable Uses; and added something of his own; and built a convenient new school-house; and was to choose his first School-Master and Usher. By the means of *James Berry*[2] (who lived in the House with me, and had lived with him) he desired me to accept it. I thought it not an inconvenient condition for my entrance, because I might also Preach up and down in Places that were most ignorant, before I presumed to take a Pastoral charge (to which I had no inclination). So to *Dudley* I went; and Mr *Foley* and *James Berry* going with me to Worcester at the time of ordination, I was ordained by the Bishop and had a Licence to teach School; for which (being examined) I subscribed'.[1] He 'preached' his 'first public sermon in the upper Parish Church; and afterwards in the Villages about'. In these he met with 'many private Christians that were Nonconformists'; and one in particular was oft disputing the nonconformist case with him.[2] 'And that excellent man, Mr *William Fenner*, had lately lived two miles off at *Sedgley*, who by defending conformity, and honouring it by a wonderfully powerful and successful way of Preaching, Conference and Holy Living, had stirred up the Nonconformists the more to a vehement pleading of their cause'.[3]

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[1] He fell under the Direction of 'three ancient Divines that were called then conformable Puritans; and all of whom (he says) bred in me an opinion that Nonconformists were unlearned men, addicted to humorous causeless singularity.' (*A Treatise of Episcopacy*, Preface, p. i). One of these was Rev. Francis Garbet, 'the faithful learned minister of Wroxeter'.

[2] Afterwards Major-General Berry, and right-hand man to Cromwell. At this time (1638) he was Baxter's dearest friend. Writing on September 12, 1659, the latter says – 'I doubt not but many thousand souls thank you when they read that you were the man that led me into the ministry' (Epistle Dedicatory of *A Treatise of Self-denial*). There is extant a letter from Berry to Baxter (dated Salop, this present Monday 1638) wherein he expresses his great joy 'that it hath pleased the Lord of Glory to call you to be an ambassador of his truth, an office better befitting the dignity of an angel than the sinful meanness of a man'. Baxter was already at Dudley with the Foleys, to whom Berry 'commends' his 'love'. He must have followed him not long afterwards, since he and Mr Foley accompanied him to Worcester in December. The two friends lodged together at the house of Richard Foley, Jr. Probably Berry was in the employ of the Foleys. When the war broke out he joined the Parliamentary forces and presently found

His circumstances, therefore, compelled Baxter 'to set upon a serious impartial Trial of the whole' matter in dispute. This, it appears, did not involve the merits of Episcopacy – as to which, *in genere*, he had no doubt. Bishop Downham (d. 1634) had satisfied him in that. Nor does he hint at any objection to Episcopacy on the part of his Nonconformist neighbours. They were far from being Presbyterians. Their quarrel with the Church had not yet advanced beyond the simply Puritan

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his way to Cromwell. Through him Cromwell invited Baxter to become Chaplain in his 'Troop of Horse' (1643) – an invitation which he refused too bluntly on account of Cromwell's 'separatist' tendency. As Berry clung to Cromwell, there thus began a divergence between him and Baxter which grew wider and deeper with time.

[1] The original letter of Bishop Thornborough notifying that Richard Baxter has been admitted to the order of Deacon is dated December 23, 1638; and that of James Littleton, the Bishop's Vicar-General, granting him the right to teach 'infra burgum de Dudley' is dated December 18.

The former is on Parchment, with the Bishop's signature and his seal in red wax but broken; the latter is on Parchment, with the label, but the seal is lost. Both are among the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, f. 400^{a}, f. 401^{a}.

[2] *Treatise of Episcopacy*, Preface, p. i.

[3] 'God had blest his ministry with so great success in the conversion of many ungodly Persons, as that the reverence of him kept up the honour of conformity among the religious people thereabouts' (*Ibid.* p. 2).

protest against particular ceremonies – kneeling at the sacraments, the wearing of the surplice, the Ring in Marriage, the Cross in Baptism, etc. Accordingly it was to these points that Baxter applied himself.

He did so under the guidance mainly of Dr William Ames (1576–1633) whose 'Fresh suit against Roman ceremonies' put the Nonconformist case in its extreme form; and Dr Burgess (1563–1635) whose 'Rejoinder' put the same case more moderately.

The result was as follows: Kneeling he 'thought lawful'; the surplice he 'more doubted of' and purposed not to wear it unless compelled; the Ring in Marriage he made no scruple about; the cross in Baptism he resolved never to use; the Prayer Book he 'judged to have much *disorder* and *defectiveness* in it but nothing which should make the use of it, in the Ordinary Publick Worship, to be unlawful to them that have not liberty to do better'. But to subscribe *everything* in the book as he had done; and professedly *ex animo*, was an act of rashness 'which, if it had been to do again', he 'durst not do'. Thus he defined his position in 1638; and, in main outline, it was the position he held to the end. But he did not define his position openly. 'Most of this', he says, 'I kept to myself'. He found his excuse in the temper of local nonconformists. 'Their censoriousness and the boldness and bitterness of their language against the Bishops threatened to drive them into separation – an evil which he could not bear to contemplate: 'As contrary to Christian Charity on one side as Persecution on the other'. He laboured continually to restrain them within due bounds. But, says he, 'their sufferings from the Bishops were the great impediment of my success'. 'He that will blow the coals must not wonder if some sparks do fly in his face'. 'To persecute men and then call them to charity is like whipping children to make them give over crying. The stronger sort of Christians can bear Mulcts and Imprisonments and Reproaches for obeying God and conscience, without abating their Charity or their weakness to their Persecutors; but to expect this from all the weak and injudicious, the young and passionate, is against all Reason and Experience'. 'I saw that he that will be loved, must love, and he that rather chooseth to be more *feared* than *loved*, must expect to be hated, or loved but diminutively. And he that will have children, must be a *Father*; and he that will be a Tyrant must be contented with slaves'. Such was Baxter's comment on the Laudian regime or system of Thorough.

He lived at Dudley less than 'a twelvemonth' and then removed to Bridgnorth – 'the second Town in Shropshire' – as assistant to its Pastor, Mr William Mastard, 'a grave and severe Ancient[1] Divine, very honest and conscionable, and an excellent Preacher, but somewhat afflicted with want of Maintenance'.[2]

Here the position was that of a full-time Minister. Preaching was no longer an annex to teaching, but his chief business. This may well have been one of the attractions; and another, in view of his nonconformist sympathies, would be the fact that at Bridgnorth he was at liberty to declare himself. For it was a place 'priveledged from all Episcopal Jurisdiction, except the Archbishop's Triennial Visitation'. Hence it had its own ecclesiastical court with its own 'ordinary' who was usually the Pastor; and so, in Baxter's Day, Mr Mastard, a kindred spirit. 'I had' – he says – 'a very full congregation to preach to and a freedom from all things which I scrupled or thought unlawful. I often read the Common Prayer before I preached, both on the Lord's-days and Holy-days; but I never administered the Lord's Supper[3] nor ever Baptized any child with the sign of the cross, nor ever wore the surplice, nor was ever put to appear at any Bishop's Court'.

His keen sense of the value of such freedom sprang from his passion for preaching. To be silenced would have been to him the worst of ills. And there were some who wished to silence him. When the Earl of Bridgewater, Lord President

[1] Not by his years: for he was born in 1600 and died in July 1641. He was a B.A. of Lincoln College, Oxford; Chaplain of St. Annes, Bewdley (1623–4); Curate of Cleavely (1625–8); Public Preacher at Bridgnorth since 1628.

[2] 'The Town-Maintenance being inconsiderable he took the Parsonage of *Oldbury* near the Town, a Village of scarce twenty houses, and so desired me to be one half day in the town and the other at the Village; but my Lot after fell out to be mostly in the Town'. He had himself 'very little maintenance' (*R.B.*, Pt. I. § 21, § 26).

[3] Being only in deacon's orders.

of the Marches of Wales, passed through the town on his way from Ludlow to the North in order to join the King, then – (August 1640) – setting out to oppose the second invasion of the Scots, – he was met by 'malicious persons' who complained of their ministers that they did not use the sign of the cross or wear the surplice or pray against the Scots,[1] and when he expressed his purpose to attend the next day's service (it was Saturday evening) and see for himself, they were elated, while Mr Mastard was so nervous that he went away leaving Baxter and Mr Swain (the Reader) 'in the danger'. But instead of going to Church the Earl went off to Lichfield; and, afterwards, excused himself on the ground that he had no right to interfere.

Thus the accusers, with the Bailiffs at their head, 'were baffled', though they had 'boasted of no less than the hanging of us'.

Nothing else occurred to trouble him from without except the 'Etcetera Oath'[2] made and issued by convocation in 1640. Baxter notes the decisive effects of this ordinance. It 'stirred up the Differing Parties (who before were all one Party, even *quiet conformists*) to speak more bitterly against one another than heretofore; and the dissenting Party began to think better of the cause of Nonconformity and to honour the Nonconformists more than they had done'. It was decisive also for himself. The ministers of the county met together at Bridgnorth 'to debate the Business'; and Baxter was one of the Majority who 'voted against the Oath'.[3] Moreover, he was 'put upon deeper thoughts of Episcopacy than ever' he had been before; and in time, reached the conclusion that, though Episcopacy in itself might not be unlawful yet 'the English Diocesan frame was guilty of the corruption of Churches and Ministry, and of the ruine of the true Church discipline'. The conclusion thus reached at the age of twenty-five was the one he maintained to the end.

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[1] For which the Bishops (not the King) had issued a form of prayer.

[2] 'It was to swear us all, That we would never consent to the alteration of the present Government of the Church, by Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, etc'. So great was the anger, dismay, and ridicule it created that Laud by the King's order directed that the oath should be forborne 'till the next meeting of convocation'. But the next meeting did not come for twenty years.

[3] 'Though every minister "in the country"' (county) 'as well as I, was for Episcopacy, yet this Oath so startled them that they appointed a meeting at Bridgnorth to consult about it. It fell out on my Lecture day; and at the meeting, it fell to my lot to be the objector, or opponent, against Mr Christopher Cartwright. . . . He defended the Oath, and, though my objections were none of the strongest, the ministers thought he failed in answering them, and we broke up more dubious than before'. (*Treatise of Episcopacy*, Preface, p. 2. His objections ten in number are set forth on p. 3).

Meanwhile he found his work discouraging as compared with Dudley. Of the latter he says:

'In this Town of Dudley I lived (not a Twelvemonth) in much comfort, among a poor tractable People, lately famous for Drunkenness, but commonly more ready to hear God's word with submission and reformation, than most Places where I have come: so that having, since the wars,[1] set up a monthly Lecture there, the Church was usually as much crowded within and at the windows, as ever I saw any *London* congregations: partly through the great willingness of the People, and partly by the exceeding populousness of the Country, where the Woods and Commons are planted with Nailers, Scithe-Smiths, and other Iron labourers, like a continued village'.[2]

His account of Bridgnorth is not so pleasing. 'The People proved a very ignorant, dead-hearted People (the Town consisting too much of Inns and Alehouses, and having no general Trade to imploy the Inhabitants in, which is the undoing of great Towns); so that though, through the great Mercy of God, my first Labours were not without Success, to the conversion of some ignorant careless sinners unto God, and were overvalued by those that were already regardful of the concernments of their Souls, yet were they not so successful as they proved afterwards in other places. Though I was in the fervour of my Affections, and never anywhere preached with more vehement desires of Mens conversion . . . yet, with the generality, an Applause of the Preacher was most of the success of the sermon which I could hear of; and their tipling and ill company and dead-heartedness quickly drowned all'.

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[1] He was writing twenty-four or twenty-five years later, and is referring here to the crowds that gathered to hear him at the monthly Lecture set up since 1642, when he preached it occasionally. But elsewhere, he speaks of 'the great congregations' which he had even at the first. (See letter of 1681 in Appendix 9.)

[2] He recalled with peculiar thankfulness 'the tender care' of Mrs Richard Foley to him in his 'weakness' – a 'gentle woman of extraordinary meekness, gentleness' and piety. She died about July 1641.

According to Baxter this 'obdurateness' of his people was Mr Mastard's greatest affliction and was punished by a 'heavy Judgment' upon the whole town. 'When the war began' – he says – 'the Town (being against the Parliament) was a Garrison for the King, kept by the neighbour Gentlemen of the country, who fortified the Castle, and when the Parliament Forces came to take the Town, they (the gentlemen) cast such effectual Fire-works from the Castle as burnt down the Town to the Ground, and burnt also the great Church . . . where Mr Mastard was interred. So that the Inhabitants were undone, and fain to lye under Hedges, till the compassion of others afforded them Entertainment and Habitation. And as for their Church, it was a great while before it was rebuilt, and that after two general collections for it'.[1] He describes this calamity as the fulfilment of a 'Prophesie' made by himself at Mr Mastard's funeral – July 1641.[2] On that occasion he preached 'in so deep a sense of the misery of that unprofitable People' that he 'could not forbear to tell them' his 'fears of some heavy judgment to come upon that place'. His opinion seemed to be that 'their sins against their faithful Pastor' merited some special sign of God's anger and that this came in the laying waste of town and church, particularly the Church.

The first time he revisited the place after the wars he pointed to its ruins and recalled his prophecy as a clear case of providence unveiled and awfully at work. His text at the funeral had been Ezekiel xxxiii. 33: 'When this cometh to pass (behold, it cometh) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them'; for his second sermon he purposely chose the same text, and drove his lesson home with such power that the effect was overwhelming. 'They and I were so much interrupted with Tears that (with some pauses) I had much ado to proceed on to the end'. This was unquestioned Puritan doctrine based on many an Old Testament example and useful as a hammer to break open a way for the Gospel. So Baxter thought – with many strange results.

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[1] The Church was burnt, with the rest of the upper town, on Easter Tuesday, March 31, 1646. One general collection for its restoration was taken in January 1647, and a second in June 1661.

[2] Mr Mastard, his wife and a Gentlewoman that lived with them died of 'a most contagious malignant Fever next the Plague, within a day or two each of other'. Mrs Foley and some of her family died of the same about the same time. Baxter regarded these events, too, as a judgment; but for what or upon whom, he does not say.

When he had been at Bridgnorth about a year and three-quarters he received a call from Kidderminster.

The Long Parliament had been sitting six months. One of its first acts was the arrest of Strafford and Laud for Treason. The reign of thorough in their sense was over. Something no less thorough in another sense was beginning. Puritan prisoners were released; Puritan sentiment was so far universal as to ensure at least great changes in the Church. On December 11, 1640, 'a world of honest citizens in their best apparel' came to the doors of the House of Commons with a petition, signed with 15,000 names, for the abolition of Episcopacy 'with all its roots and branches'. This was an extreme for which, at present, only the few were prepared. Insistence on it might bring to light, and soon did, irreconcileable differences. But when the 'Parliament among other parts of their Reformation, resolved to reform the corrupted Clergy and appointed a Committee to receive Petitions and complaints against them' there was no dissent to speak of. 'The King and Parliament were not yet divided, but concurred'. All alike, more or less eagerly, desired the removal of 'Insufficiency, false Doctrine, illegal Innovations or Scandal'. Certainly all decent people desired it; and so no sooner was it understood that the way was open for reform than 'multitudes in all countreys (i.e. counties) came up with Petitions against their ministers'.[1]

Among other 'complainers, the Town of Kidderminster in Worcestershire drew up a Petition against their Ministers' viz. the Vicar and his two curates. As to the Vicar, his utter insufficiency for the Ministry was proved (said the Petition) by his being unlearned and a frequenter (sometimes drunk) of

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[1] *R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 19. Baxter refers to the first 'Century of scandalous ministers' published by the chairman of the Committee, Mr John White; and is one of those 'many moderate men' who 'wished that their nakedness had been rather hid than exposed to the world's derision'. 'For Century White' see *D. N. B.*

Alehouses. He 'preached but once a quarter', and then 'so weakly as exposed him to laughter'. Moreover, he had been 'presented by a Papist'[1]; and, from his having 'turned the Table Altarwise', might be deemed something of a Papist himself. What the town-curate was accused of is not stated; but of the other, who was 'Curate at a Chappel in the Parish', he is (said the Petition) 'a common Tippler and a Drunkard', 'a railing quarreller', one whose 'Trade in the Week' is 'unlawful Marriages' and, in short, everyway incompetent. The Vicar, knowing he had no case, offered to compromise; and by the mediation principally of Sir Henry Herbert, M.P. for Bewdley,[2] who had the Petition in hand, a compromise was agreed upon. He was to keep his place as Vicar and 'read Common Prayer'. He was, however, to allow £60 a year (out of his £200 living) for a Preacher instead of the town-curate – this Preacher to be chosen by a parochial committee of fourteen and to have the right of 'preaching whenever he pleased'. 'To perform this he gave a bond of £500'.[3]

'These things being thus finished' the committee of fourteen – including the Bailiff – lost no time in looking out for a Lecturer.

Their decision to have a Lecturer or Preacher was significant. For it meant a reversal of the policy which had led Archbishop Laud, – in obeying the King's injunctions of 1634 and his own inclination – to aim at a complete suppression of the Lecturers as a mischievous Puritan institution. They stood, in fact, for the moral aspect of worship as distinct from the ceremonial; and this did not suit Laud. But to the Puritans it was their great recommendation. Hence it was a sign of predominating Puritan influence in the parish when the Committee decided to appoint a Lecturer.

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[1] Sir Edward Blount. Whitgift's first list of recusants (Papists) to the Privy Council in 1579 included Thomas Blount of Kidderminster. In that year five all together were reported for the Deanery of Kidderminster.

[2] Sir Henry lived at Ribbesford Hall, on the Severn, at Bewdley, which he purchased in 1627; and succeeded Sir Ralph Clare as Burgess for Bewdley in 1640. When the war broke out he sided with the King, and, for executing the King's commission of Array, was 'suspended' by the House of Commons in August, 1642. At the Restoration he regained his seat and held it until his death in 1673. (See Burton's *Bewdley*, p. 67.)

[3] The original Bond whereby George Dance of Kidderminster, Clerk, was bound in £500 to Henry Pagett and William Pymson, with condition for his allowance of £60 a year to a godly learned Preacher to be Lecturer there during his incumbency, is among the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, ff. 413^{b}–414^{a}. Its date is February 26, $164\frac{0}{1}$.

Their first candidate, 'old Mr. Lapthorn', though he came with a great reputation, 'offended the intelligent leading Party' by his roughness and lack of method. So 'they rejected him somewhat uncivilly, to his great displeasure'. Their second nominee was the young preacher of Bridgnorth – whom they approached first of all in two letters, one dated March 19, 164$\frac{0}{1}$, signed by fifteen members of the congregation most of whom were also feofees; and the other dated March 20, signed by fourteen feofees only. Both are couched in the same terms, except that the latter (perhaps the more strictly official of the two) adds a sentence or two setting forth the desirability of 'Thursday next in the morning' for Baxter's visit. It is the day 'wherein is offered the advantage of a publique assembly, and also our market day, and also a day whereon we desire a weekly lecture'. Baxter could not come for that day, but expressed readiness to appoint another, on certain conditions – of which one was the provision of a convenient house. He appears, at the same time, to have said that his inclination to Kidderminster was already so strong that, for its sake, he was turning away from other and more lucrative offers. In the letter which acknowledged this (with much thankfulness) the fifteen subscribers (composed of feofees and others) begged him to come for 'the first Sabbath in the new year', i.e. the first Sunday in April. He consented; and, after preaching 'one day', was at once chosen *nem. con.* Hereupon, all the feofees together with ten other Parishioners issued, on April 5, a proclamation 'to all Christian people' that they 'have chosen, elected and nominated and doe by these presents choose elect and nominate Mr Richard Baxter of Bridgnorth in the county of Salop to be our preacher and Lecturer and to preach unto us and the rest of our parishioners in our Parish Church and instruct us out of the Word of God which we cheerfully doe in regard we have heard him divers[1] tymes and doe well approve him. And therefore we heartily desire the said Mr Baxter to accept the Place of Lecturer . . .'[1]

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[1] If this means more than twice on the previous Sunday it may point to occasions when some of the writers had heard him at Bridgnorth.

'My mind' – he says – 'was much to the place as soon as it was described to me; because it was a full congregation and most convenient Temple; an ignorant, rude and revelling people, for the most part, who had need of preaching and yet had among them a company of converts who were humble, godly and of good conversation, and not much hated of the rest, and, therefore, the fitter to assist their Teacher; but, above all, because they had hardly ever had any lively serious preaching among them: For *Bridgnorth* had made me resolve that I would never go among a People that had been hardened in unprofitableness under an awakening Ministry, but either to such as never had any convincing Preacher, or to such as had profited by him'. 'And thus' – he adds – 'I was brought by the gracious Providence of God to that place which had the chiefest of my Labours, and yielded me the greatest Fruits of comfort. And I noted the mercy of God in this, that I never went to any place in my Life among all my changes, which I had before desired, designed or thought of (much less sought), but only to those that I never thought of, till the sudden Invitation did surprise me'.

[1] Appendix III.

PART ONE

I

KIDDERMINSTER

KIDDERMINSTER could not compare for beauty of situation with Bridgnorth, which has the Severn winding at its feet, and spacious views of the slopes, or hills, which line its lovely course. Kidderminster, on the contrary, lies in the lap of a shallow irregular basin scooped out by the Stour, a sluggish tributary of the Severn which it joins four miles away between Bewdley and Stourport. It is a point where some half a dozen roads – descending from higher ground on all sides – meet and diverge. No doubt this fact explains the origin of the town. Such a junction of traffic was sure to attract settlers; and has done so for at least 1,500 years.

Our first glimpse of it is under the appropriate name of Usmere,[1] a place of broadwaters. But its permanent name was not long in coming. That it came with the erection of a Minster or Church is clear from its second half; but what lay behind its first – Kidder – has been a matter of dispute. Some think it is a compressed form of Cynebert, the Saxon Earl to whom 'lands in Usmere' were granted (in 736) by King Ethelbald (716–55). Others, with greater probability, refer it to Cydda or Chad, the Missionary of Mercia, who died as Bishop of Lichfield in March 672[2] and became the patron-saint of its cathedral. With the Danish invasion (781–900) the Church, whatever it was, seems to have been destroyed[3]; and no other had taken its place by 1086 – the date of Domesday Book – when 'Chideminster' is spoken of as 'totum wastum'. By 1170, however, a great change had come about. The Church of St Mary's and All Saints had been built. Its Rector, Robert of Hurcott, was a well-endowed Incumbent; and Kidderminster had given its name to a very extensive rural deanery.[1]

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[1] Us = Ouse. Mere = a pool or lake. Us = flowing water.

[2] This is more likely than to identify him with his brother Cedd, Bishop of Essex, who died at his Monastery of Lastingham, October 26, 664. C and ch were pronounced *hard*, like Chent = Kent, Chenfare = Kinver.

The following varieties of spelling between 1558–1654 are taken from 'The old order Book of Hartlebury Grammar School' (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1904):

Kytherminst'r, p. 5.
Kedermy'str, p. 7.
Kethermy'str, p. 9.
Kettermi'ster, p. 11.
Kidderminster, p. 62.
Kitterminster, p. 74.

[3] Tanner, Thos. (1674–1735), in his *Notitia Monastica* (1695) mentions it as a 'destroyed monastery'.

The change may have been a natural result of the fact that from being a royal demesne – not much regarded – down to the beginning of Henry II's reign (1154–89) it was then made the fief of a royal favourite, Manifer de Bisset Dapifer, who lived on the Manor and found his interest in its improvement. Whether de Bisset actually rebuilt the Church is not certain, but is a fair inference from his being described in 1164 as its first patron. His descendants were its patrons until 1340, when Rectors (eight in all) were succeeded by a long line of Vicars.[2]

Baxter, speaking from the preacher's standpoint, calls the Church 'a most convenient temple'. He does not state its dimensions, nor does he say a word about its architecture. This at least did not interest him. But, although the building has undergone many structural alterations and the oldest fragments of the present fabric are said to be not earlier than the thirteenth century, its general outline and appearance have always been much the same. Measured internally, it consists now of a chancel 43½ feet long by 19½ feet wide, a nave 81 feet by 19 feet, north and south aisles, and south-west tower. The building is longer, at the chancel end, than in Baxter's day, but otherwise not very different. The main changes have been within. In particular, there are now no galleries. According to an authority which I feel safe in following,[1] there was originally no gallery in any part of the Church except perhaps a rood-loft between chancel and nave; nor was there any gallery on the North side till after Baxter's day. What then did he mean when he spoke of five galleries having to be built for the accommodation of his hearers? Mr Cave's conclusion, based on documents in the Bishop's Registry, Worcester, is that this must be understood as one gallery on the south side of the nave divided into five sections between its five arcades; and reached by a staircase running from one of the arcade windows. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that on one of the pillars (the third) on the North side is a plate marking the site of Baxter's pulpit, and indicating, by its position, that the galleries were all before him.[2] One can only guess at the number of sittings. Perhaps 1,000 would be rather above than below the mark.

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[1] Burton's *History of Kidderminster*, p. ii.

[2] He, or his son, had two daughters between whom the Manor was divided. One of these gave her moiety (including the patronage of St. Mary's) to the Hospital of Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire, a lazar-house for women. She herself was said to have been a leper; but the tradition (says Camden's editor, 1722, p. 619) is a vulgar fable.

Her sister married Sir William Beauchamp, son of the Earl of Warwick and father of Sir Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Worcester, whose heiress married Edward Neville, Lord of Abergavenny. Thus the Barons of Abergavenny became proprietors of a moiety of the Manor and so continued until it was purchased by Baxter's friend, Thomas Foley (about 1670).

The other moiety, after the dissolution of the Monasteries, passed – in 1553 – first, to John Dudley, Viscount Lisle and Duke of Northumberland (executed 1553), next to the Blounts of Kinlet, Salop. At the death of Sir Edward Blount his son-in-law, the Earl of Newport, became the owner, and then (strange to say) Edmund Waller the Poet (1606–87). Part of his estate he sold in 1643, 'in order to pay his fine to Parliament on account of what is called Waller's Plot'. So Nash; but 1643 is too early, as it was not till 4th November 1644 that his fine of £10,000 was imposed – together with banishment from the realm.

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[1] That of Mr Thomas Cave, Broadwaters, Kidderminster, a member of the Worcestershire Historical Society, who has devoted much pains to the study of the ancient records of Church and town.

[2] Some years after Lord Windsor (1627?–87) came to live in Kidderminster (see *R.B.*, ii. p. 377) about July 1661, a claim on his behalf to appropriate 'a part of the sayd South Gallery, being five yards in length, at the eastern end thereof, extending itself from Pillar to pillar, together with a passage up to it, to be made under one of the southern windows' – was conceded by the Bishop's Chancellor (February 4, 1665). This entailed the removal, it seems, of at least thirty persons, who petitioned that half the seats of the Gallery claimed for Lord Windsor, and all the rest, should be confirmed to the use of the inhabitants of Kidderminster for ever. The petitioners beg further, that there shall be an addition to the North Gallery, at Lord Windsor's expense, for the use of those who may be removed. A mandate of March 2 makes it clear that the old seat-holders refused to budge. A later Mandate (September 16, 1680), which authorizes the erection of a gallery (16 feet by 11 feet) in the North side, is fair proof that none had been there before. Another mandate (read in the Church on March 4, 1682) gives leave to 'erect a gallery in the upper end of the church upon the front of the scholars gallery (23 feet by 5 feet) for the convenience of the parishioners'. 'Upper End' here meant the Chancel end, as the erection was opposed by the Lay Rector, Mr Richard Dobbins, on the ground that it would cut off

Situated at the head of the town on a slight eminence the Church was a conspicuous object. Just below, the river ran south and south-west; and west of the river was a strip of open fields, of varying width, backed by rising ground, with sharp ledges, here and there, of red sandstone. The Church and most of the town stood on the east of the river. Beginning at the Church, there seems to have been in Baxter's time, as there is still, a broad space outside the churchyard and opposite the main entrance. This was flanked on the East by a few detached houses of the better class. Here e.g. was the house of Mrs Hanmer (Mother of Margaret Charlton who became Mrs Baxter) which overlooked the graveyard. Here, too, was the house owned, for a time, by the poet Waller, and only pulled down in 1782. Perhaps also Colonel John Bridges, who bought the patronage of the Church from Sir Edward Blount and was a magistrate, had his house here; and Mr Daniel Dobbyns, High Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1642. One imagines that these villas did not lack gardens, back and front. Nor did the houses of Church Street which, also, were occupied, or owned, by the well-to-do. Behind the respectable quarter, that is, eastward of Church Street and the Church, lived the bulk of the people in streets of which the names in some cases have survived, such as Hall Street, Orchard Street and Blackwell Street.[1] Of these the character was poor and mean – with abundance of dirt and a too plentiful sprinkling of ale-houses. At the lower end Church Street opened out into the Bull Ring; and, farther on, was the market-place, abutting on the court-house and at right angles to High Street.

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both light and sound from the Chancel – a protest which seems to have been allowed.

There is abundant evidence, we may add, that the prevailing custom was for seat-holders not merely to rent but also to own their seats.

[1] Doharty's Map of the town in 1753 indicates that there were even then few if any houses in Mill Street, Bewdley Lane and Park Lane on the West, nor in Coventry Street and Worcester Street on the East—though plans for building on or near these sites had been drawn out. At that date the population is given as 4,000, an increase of nearly 2,000 since Baxter's time – *if it refers only to the Borough*, which isn't clear.

In front of the court-house seems to have been stationed the public stocks. From the foot of High Street another street – now and perhaps then called Vicars Street – led to the Vicarage which stood, amidst its grounds, on the site now marked and adorned by the Statue of Sir Rowland Hill; and close to the Vicars Brook, flowing through its last clear stage to the Stour. Beyond and around this was open country. But the lord's Mill (Goodwin's), which gave the name to Mill Street, stood on the West side of Stour; and this, no doubt (as usual), gathered to it, from the first, a number of houses. There was a Mill Street, with its Cross, as early as 1333; and, perhaps, some business done at the Cross. It has been pointed out, also, that there must have been works of a kind on both sides of the river, inasmuch as its 'water was necessary for cleaning, fulling, and dyeing purposes' in connection with the cloth trade; and that, almost certainly, such works were likewise dwelling-houses. Further, there is said to be 'good evidence of certain messes with appurtenances' (possibly including houses) whose location was on the West 'up to and about' the Mill. Allowing for all this, however, it is still correct to say that the town, as a whole, lay on the East side of the Stour.[1]

High Street was the centre for shopping; and 'the trades included those of diaper, goldsmith, ironmonger, and glover'. Thursday – from time immemorial Market day – was, no doubt, the busiest of the Week, unless it might be the evening of Saturday.

With regard to the common occupation of the people, Baxter speaks of it as 'stuff weaving', that is, of 'linsey-woolsey stuffs'.[2] As far back as 1332, when Edward III visited the town for three days, 'the townsmen were making broad and narrow kerseys, and the trade of the Tenter (stretcher or dyer of cloth) was strictly regulated'. It would be in connection with this trade that disputes arose in the fifteenth century, between Bewdley and Kidderminster, relating to the toll on wool brought out of Wales across Bewdley Bridge. An Act of 1533–4, – which limited the cloth industry to certain towns including Kidderminster, – is a sign of its flourishing state in the sixteenth century; and we have the evidence of a royal charter in 1636 that Kidderminster, then, was a town 'which has of late much flourished by its manufacture in cloth and has become very prosperous'.[1]

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[1] My authority on these points is Mr Cave, as above, who (among other sources) quotes specific statements, from 'a Customal of Kidderminster' of the year 1333.

[2] The Carpet trade did not begin till 1735. 'At first' – says Nash – 'they made the Scotch or flat carpets without a pile; about 1749 the cut carpets, after the manner of Wilton, were introduced and this manufacture has flourished very much' thanks (he says) 'to the industry, frugality and simplicity of the manners of the inhabitants': for which the credit is due 'in a great degree' to 'the labours and example of' Baxter.

This was written in 1777.

The looms at which the cloth was woven were set up in the home and worked by hand. Their number in Baxter's day is not precisely known, but in 1677 it was 417, and cannot have been much less twenty years earlier. In that year the looms were served by 157 Master weavers, 187 journeymen and 115 apprentices. Some of the Masters owned more looms than one, but none had more than seven. This illustrates what is said by Baxter: 'My People were not *Rich*. There were among them very few *Beggars*, because their common Trade of Stuff-weaving would find work for all men, women and children, that were able; and there were none of the Tradesmen very rich, seeing their Trade was poor, that would but find them food and Raiment. The Magistrates of the Town were few of them worth £40 *per Annum*, and most not half so much. Three or four of the richest thriving Masters of the Trade got but about £500 or £600 in twenty years, and, it may be, lost £100 of it at once by an ill Debtor. The generality of the Master Workmen, lived but a little better than their Journeymen (from hand to mouth) but only that they laboured not altogether so hard'.

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[1] Mr J. W. Willis Bund in his introduction to *Worcestershire County Records*, vol. i, for 1591–1643, says the clothing trade in its various branches (Brode weaving, cloth making, coverlet weaving, Garter weaving, embroidering, linen weaving, narrow weaving, silk weaving, wool winding, etc.) was spread throughout the county but had its chief seat at Kidderminster and Worcester. It may be added here, from the same authority, that Dudley and Stourbridge were then (as now) the centres for scythe-making, nailing and grinding, that the salt trade was confined to Droitwich, that Bewdley had a trade of its own – making of caps, and that the major part of the population lay in the South and East of the County: Worcester, Kidderminster, Evesham, Feckenham, Bromsgrove. It gathered around the main roads, particularly the London Road, which came down Broadway Hill, passed on to Evesham and then divided into two Branches . . . (pp. xxxvi, xxxix).

Though not more degraded than many other towns the moral condition of Kidderminster was very low. He had heard of its inhabitants as 'an ignorant rude and revelling People'; but found them worse than the report. The most prevalent vice was drunkenness. It was so even at the end of his ministry. What it was at the beginning one is left to imagine. And immorality, in the strict sense, seems to have been scarcely less common. This might be inferred from his frequent condemnation of it; but there is a passage in his *Treatise of Self-denial* (1660) which puts it in a glaring light. The chapter in which it occurs (on 'Wanton Discourse') was preached before it was printed; and is manifestly drawn from life:

'What abundance of children are sent to the devil' (the context shows by the example and talk of their elders) 'and must bestow many days and hours in learning their lessons; and when they have learned them, he must hear them say them over, usually more than once a day! As they are at work in their shops or fields, they are at it, either by wanton songs or ribald, filthy talk: yea, they be not ashamed to sing them as they go about the streets: Mark this you that are the servants of Christ! Will you evermore be ashamed of your Master, or of his holy Service? Will you be ashamed to confess him in the open streets, or to be heard at prayer, or reading or singing the praise of God in your houses; when the devil's servants are trained up in their very childhood to sing *his* psalms in the open streets, and publicly to serve him without fear or shame? May not a man conjecture by their education, what trade they are intended for? They that serve an apprenticeship to a trade, are sure intended to live upon it. One would think by the talk and the songs of many of the children in the streets, that the Parents had bound them apprentices to a brothel-house, and intended that their Trade should be fornication, whoredom, and all uncleanness! Why else do they learn the art of talking of it, but in order to the art of practising it? Sure I am, they are the apprentices of Satan, and a doleful case to think on. . . . Christ telleth us that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh'; and therefore they cannot in reason blame us, if we judge of their hearts by their tongues: for though the tongue is too often better than the heart, it is seldom worse. And surely if many of our wretched neighbours may be judged of by this rule of Christ, we must needs conclude that they have lustful, filthy, adulterous hearts; what else can we think of them when their discourse and songs are filthy but that their hearts are filthy? Christ hath warranted us to conclude, that rotten speeches come from the abundance of a rotten heart. Young people, I beseech you to regard your credit, if you regard not your salvation. Will you openly proclaim in the ears of the world that you are trained soldiers of the devil, learning to be whores or whoremongers, or that you have lust and whoredom in your hearts? Is it your meaning to tell this to all the town? What doth it in your mouths, if it be not in your hearts? Will you not judge by a man's language what countryman he is? If he speak Welch, you will think he is a Welchman; if Irish, you will think he is an Irishman; if English, you will conjecture he is an Englishman; and if you speak the language of harlots and brothel houses, what can we think but that you are such yourselves, or at least that you are training to be such? . . .'

Some excuse for such habits is suggested by an observation of Nash that the conditions under which the people lived and worked were most unhealthy. Even when he wrote – more than a century later – 'the complexion and size of the people' – he says – 'seems to be hurt by their trade, which is sedentary and requires confinement. The weavers are generally of a sallow cachetick complexion. Stomachic and pulmonary complaints are frequent among them. . . . The houses and shops not being sufficiently airy and clean, fevers for the most part take a putrid turn'. Conditions may not have been worse in Baxter's time, but certainly they were no better. His frequent reference to the cases of disease around him – which were so numerous and severe that he had to supplement what the regular doctor could do by his own amateur treatment, or else see many of the poorest die, – bears eloquent witness to the state of things; and the terrible havoc made by fever or the plague from time to time, tells the same story. In December, 1637, for instance, there were forty-seven deaths from the plague.

What has been said was peculiar to the town. Nash remarks on the contrast, in this respect, between the town and the Foreign. 'The Inhabitants of the Foreign' – he says – 'are vigorous and healthy and arrive at a good old age'. Thanks to a freer and simpler life in purer air! By the Foreign he meant, chiefly, that part of the parish west and above the Stour which did not fall within the town's Jurisdiction; and practically he was correct – though, in its first use, the term was descriptive of land in the parish which did not belong to the royal demesne, or home-farm. Many hamlets, representative of the sixteen berewicks mentioned in Domesday Book, had place in the Foreign.[1] Some of these were on the east of the town, but more were on the west; and while, individually, none of them (except Mitton and Wribbenhall) had more than a handful of residents collectively, their population equalled, and at one period exceeded, that of the town.[2] The Western Division (or Foreign proper) was by far the larger, the Eastern not exceeding an area of 6 or 7 square miles, whereas the Western had 24. The total area of the parish was 19,800 acres, or about 31 square miles; its circuit about 21; and its total population about 4,000, of which the town could claim little more than half. It was smaller than Bewdley[3] its nearest neighbour – two miles or so to the West; and, also, politically less important, since Bewdley was one of the four towns in the county that returned a member to the House of Commons; the other three being Worcester, Evesham and Droitwich. Moreover, compared with some other places, now considerably behind it in prosperity, it was less wealthy. Thus, the 'Lay Subsidy Roll' for May 2, 1603, shows that Bewdley was assessed at £11 12*s.*; Bromsgrove at £15 17*s.* 7¼*d.*; Droitwich at £12 6*s.* 6*d.*; King's Norton at £21 1*s.* 11¼*d.*; and Kidderminster Borough at

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[1] *Hamlets on the East* – Broadwaters, Hurcote, Wannerton, Blakedown, Heatley Mill, Commerton (Comberton), Aggborough.

Hamlets on the West – Blackbrook (Blakebrook), French (Franche), Abberley high and low, Trimpley, Eymore, Halls, Wassall, Hoarstone, Wribbenhall, Sandhouses, Blackstone, Lickhill, Mitton upper and lower, Stourport.

[2] In 1541–52 (says Nash) the town possessed not more, perhaps, than 300 inhabitants but the hamlets (exclusive of Mitton) 825.

[3] In 1602 its population is given as probably 2,200, that of Bewdley as 2,450 (Burton – *History of Bewdley*, p. 15).

£10 16*s.* 3½*d.*[1] Further, while forty-two inhabitants of Bewdley were rated *in bonis* (or on personal property) only nineteen of Kidderminster were so rated. There was, in fact, no wealthy resident in Kidderminster during Baxter's time.

As he says, acute poverty was absent and many were more or less thriving, but the only rich man lived outside – just across the river, beyond the borough boundary. This was Sir Ralph Clare of whom more will be said hereafter. His home, Caldwell Hall, is noted as a solitary house situated on the West of the Stour. It had stood there since 1347, when an (unnamed) knightly family is said to have acquired the sub-manor of Caldwell and built 'a moated castle'. John Leland, the Antiquary, described it in 1539 as 'a fayre Manor Place on Stour' – 'a little benethe Kidour'. It then belonged to the Winters who had bought it from the Coxes and afterwards sold it to Francis Clare father of Sir Ralph. The latter had ruled there in a squirely way thirty-three years before Baxter's arrival, and died there (aged 80) in April 1670. Caldwell was still somewhat of a 'moated castle', surrounded (perhaps) by water drawn from the adjacent Stour – though the addition of an incongruous brick edifice on the West side of its tower betokened a departing glory. It was the one building which could challenge attention after the Church, and be said to impart a touch of distinction to its rather squalid neighbour, the town.

Something needs to be said in conclusion about the local government of the town. In February 1632–3 it petitioned the King for an incorporating charter. This was granted in August 1636. No drastic changes were made in the previous customary order. There was still to be a high Steward; and an under-steward (learned in the laws of England). But at the death of the first Steward (Sir Ralph Clare, nominated by the Crown) his successors were to be elected by the Bailiff and Burgesses. The Bailiff was to be chosen annually from the twelve capital Burgesses by the whole of the Burgesses, from whom in turn the twelve were elected; while Bailiff and Burgesses together were to have the right of appointing 'twenty-five men of the more honest and upright inhabitants, residing within the Borough, who shall be called assistants of the Bailiff and chief Burgesses in all affairs which concern the said Borough'. (It is easy to recognize the incipient features of Mayor, Town-clerk, Aldermen and Common Councillors.) There were to be three Justices of the Peace – viz. – Bailiff, ex-Bailiff, and under-steward. Certain Burgesses, also, were to be appointed to act as Constables[1] each for one year.[2] Bailiff and capital Burgesses were responsible for Bye-laws; and on December 16, 1640 – less than six months before the coming of Baxter, – they met in the Court House and drew up the following:

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[1] Worcester Historical Society – Lay Subsidy Roll, edited by John Amphlett, 1907.

The point of comparison here is between the rest and Kidderminster Borough. The Foreign was assessed at £7 3*s.* 4*d.* Dudley comes lowest at £3 3*s.* 8*d.*

Among the fifteen in Kidderminster Borough rated on property *in terris* were John Smith, barber, and Thomas Doolittle – each on 20*s.*

'Every burgess and inhabitant must help the bailiff and constable in case of affrays; and to this end, must keep in his house or shop conveniently and readily prepared, one staff, bill, or halbert, upon pain of 10*s*. for every month that it is deficient. Innkeepers must not allow any persons to use unlawful games in their houses, nor to sit tippling on Sundays or holidays or other times,[3] by day or by night, excepting travellers only. Immediately after the beginning of the second lesson on Sunday – at morning and evening prayers – the Churchwardens and constables must go out of Church, and make diligent search into all taverns and alehouses. If they find there householders and men of worth, they are to take special notice of them, and present them to the Ordinary; but if they be able and vagrant persons, or of no worth and ability, they shall arrest them and bring them before the Bailiff to receive condign punishment. If any persons remove soil, muck, or com-post from his stables, and leave it in the streets he must clear it away within six days, or be fined 12*d.* a day. Every inhabitant must cause the street before his house to be made clean on Saturday afternoons, before sunset, on pain of 12*d.* No one might exercise any trade, mystery, or occupation without special consent of the Bailiff and Burgesses, unless he were a burgess or had served seven years' apprenticeship in the town: the penalty was 10*s.* for every market day. A fine of 20*s.* was incurred by anyone who entertained a stranger within his house longer than six days, unless he had licence beforehand from the Bailiff. Every capital Burgess and innkeeper was required to set a lanthorn, with a burning candle therein, at his house door on every dark night from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. from November 1 to the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Saint Mary, yearly: penalty, 4*d.* each night'. We can see from this – despite the popish tang of the phrase about the Virgin – that the Puritan temper of the new minister was already, to some extent, in possession of his new charge.

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[1] The Foreign, too, had its constable – at least in 1635 (*Worcestershire County Records*, vol. i, 1591–1643, p. 595).

[2] The Bailiff might not walk the streets except in a 'comely and decent black gown'; and the twelve capital Burgesses were to provide themselves each with a gown 'in which to attend the Bailiff to Church on Sundays and festivals'.

[3] This was nothing new. In *Worcestershire County Records*, vol. i, p. 481, there is 'Indictment of John Etheridge of Kitterminster Victualler, for both before and after the 21st day of May 1601, allowing tipling, gaming and other unlawful acts in his house during divine service'.

2

FIRST PERIOD OF MINISTRY

(April 1641 – July 1642)

When Baxter came to Kidderminster in April 1641 he appears to have taken up his abode in the house at the lower end of High Street which served him for a residence through both periods of his ministry. Its back windows overlooked what used to be called 'Behind Shops' and is now Swan Street; and from the upper line of these he would have a clear view of the Church. The house is one of the few survivals from Baxter's time and presents but little external change; nor has there been much alteration of the 'few rooms in the top' which he speaks of as those only which he occupied. These are as they were; and give an impression of 'straitness' which suggests little or nothing of comfort. But comfort was never a matter of any great concern to Baxter. If there were space enough in which to work he was content.[1]

His next door neighbour was Richard Cook, of Kinver, a Mercer; and his house 'proved so secretly crackt and ruinous that he was afraid it would undo him to repair it' – a state of things which so preyed upon his mind as to turn his brain (*R.B.* I. p. 81). Was his house an exception? Or, were the others, including Baxter's in a like condition? In any case, his situation made a contrast to that of Mr Dance who still enjoyed the Vicarage and more than two-thirds of the income – with no duties beyond 'reading common prayer', conducting funerals, and, for a time, administering the sacraments.

Baxter's work was to preach. At first he did, and was expected to do, nothing else; and he shared, to the full, the Puritan estimation of his office as the highest possible. He took it to be the chief instrument of salvation. When Ezekiel beheld in vision the Valley of dry bones and realized that only by the breath or spirit of God could they be made to move and live, it is deeply significant that he realized, at the same time, the necessity of his own preaching as a medium of the divine action. 'And the Lord God said unto me, Prophesy over these dry bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord . . . so I prophesied as I was commanded'. This was what the Puritans realized. It was at the root of their agitation, and affection, for those regular prophesyings or Lectureships which Church and State so shortsightedly tried to suppress.

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[1] There are only two top rooms, the front 'about 16 feet 6 inches by 10 feet, and the back (probably the study) about 13 feet 6 inches by 10 feet and 5 feet 6 inches in height'. So, unless he used as well the two rooms immediately below, it is hard to see how he could (at a later time) accommodate his father and stepmother, or could entertain to dinner (as he did) the ministers who came to his Thursday lecture week by week. What, too, of his housekeeper, Jane Matthews?

It was their vital point of difference from the ceremonialists. Not by ritual forms, nor even by the sacraments is the grace of God imparted, but rather by inspired personalities. So said the Puritans; and so it became a rule (which gradually hardened into a superstition) that every public act of worship or sacramental observance must have its attendant and explanatory sermon. The result in many cases was a degradation of the idea of worship from which the Churches, that boast a Puritan descent, have not yet recovered. But such onesidedness was not inevitable. There were Puritans who escaped it; and Baxter did. He gave a high place to the 'ordinances'. He made much of public prayer and praise, and the sacraments. He thought that no pains could be too great to invest them with due reverence. His appreciation of sacred music, in particular, as a means of grace to the congregation drew upon him some censure from the stricter sort.[1] Nevertheless, for him, too, the office and function of the preacher always held the first place. 'Christ maketh them the chief instruments for the propagating of his truth and kingdom in the world, for the gathering of Churches and preserving and defending contradicted truth. They are the Lights of the world and the salt of the earth. All Christians are bound to teach or help each other in charity, but Christ's ministers are set in the Church (as Parents in Families) to do it by office. And therefore must (they) be qualified above others for it, and be wholly dedicated to it and attend continually on it . . . never yet was the Gospel well propagated nor continued in any country in the world, but by means of the ministers of Christ. And O! what difference hath there been in their successes as they differed in ability, piety and diligence! And how great an honour is it to be such blessed instruments of building up the house of God and propagating the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ, and the Christian faith and Godliness in the world'.[1]

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[1] All through his ministry he was addicted to sacred music in public and private. He defends the use of it again and again – see e.g. his Christian Directory. One of his latest pleasant tasks was to produce a 'Paraphrase on the Psalms' for congregational use – printed 1692 by his friend and executor Sylvester – who says in the preface 'When his sleep was intermitted or removed in the night he then sang much . . . and on the Lord's Day . . . he thought . . . the service very defective without some considerable times being spent in the Divine melodious exercise of singing Psalms. . . .'

I have tried, through Mr Cave, to ascertain if St. Mary's had an organ in Baxter's day. If it had he was not the man to object. But Mr Cave finds no trace of an organ before the erection of the West gallery and thinks that if there had been one the Roundheads would have taken it down as they did that of the cathedral – in which case, we should have heard of it.

'True Pastors and Bishops of the Church do thirst after the conversion and happiness of sinners and spend their lives in diligent labours to these ends, not thinking it too much to stoop to the poorest for their good, nor regarding worldly wealth and glory in comparison with the winning of one soul, nor counting their lives dear if they might finish their course and ministry with joy'.[2]

Such words express what the writer himself felt and believed when he took up his work at Kidderminster. He was there as God's ambassador. Whether the verse on the pillar in front of which stood his pulpit was inscribed by his direction or not it was true of him – 'We preache not ourselves but Jesus Christe our Lorde. We are not as the moste parte are who, choppe and change with the worde of God, but . . .'[3] It is easy to believe, therefore, that his coming was followed by an instantaneous change of atmosphere. With a young preacher in the pulpit full of faith in his message, and possessing, in wonderful measure, 'a persuading faculty of expression' the old dead services sprang at once into life. Although there were bells to summon the people[1] there was no need of them. From town and Foreign they streamed to the Church with willing feet – some moved by spiritual hunger, some by admiration, some, no doubt, by curiosity; but all by a compelling desire to hear the new voice. Mr Dance was there in his surplice to read the Common Prayer; but none thought of him, nor could there be much to attract in the uncouth singing – without organ or choir – of Sternhold and Hopkins' Paraphrase of the Psalms. It was the tall young man in black gown,[2] which set off the paleness of his already pain-worn face – upon whom all eyes were fastened. Perhaps he read and expounded the lessons – though this is not likely. More likely, he supplemented the Liturgy by a 'conceived' or 'extemporate' prayer before preaching. But the centre of interest was the sermon, never less than an hour long, measured by the hour-glass at his side; and often read from a closely written MS.;[3] but delivered with a vehement intensity which streamed its kindling rays from face and gesture as well as voice. We are at no loss to characterize his sermons. Hundreds of them are extant in his practical treatises; and though there are no examples perhaps of his earliest period, his method from the beginning was much the same. He tells us expressly, indeed, that the preacher's aim should be first to convince the under-

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[1] *Compassionate Counsel to all Young Men* . . . p. 133 (1652).

[2] Chap. X in *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667).

[3] From Tyndal's version: The pulpit (now treasured in the vestry of the New Meeting House) had been given by 'Mrs Alice Dawks, widow' in 1621, twenty years before. An inscription 'upon the carved panel which supports the beautiful sounding-board' states this fact. Just above is another inscription 'Praise the Lord'; and 'attached to the panel above the preachers head is a royal crown on a cushion in wood'. The pulpit is octagonal in shape and carved flowers adorn its sides. A good judge (Sir James Allanson Picton) is said to have 'pronounced it to be one of the finest specimens of Jacobean carving'. Yet an authentic tradition says that in 1780 it was thrown out with the old pews of the Church as mere timber, and purchased by Mr Nicholas Pearsall (the most active founder of the

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New Meeting), for £5. Indeed, the tradition reads as if this sum bought the lot!

[1] To prove the existence of bells before Baxter's time it seems enough to quote the entry which Mr Cave has copied from the Parish Register under the year 1578. This says that on 'June viii was buried William the sonne of Nicholas Betinson who perished by a fall out of the bell cellar in the steeple, and fell through all the flouers to the ground'.

[2] Preachers, whether Puritan or otherwise, usually preached in black gowns before 1660.

[3] He says in his *Sheet against the Quakers* (1657) that the charge they brought against him of reading his sermons was true. He wrote and read them except when he happened to be too busy or too lazy. I think all the great preachers of the seventeenth century did the same.

standing and then to engage the heart. Light first, then heat. And such was his unvarying method. Beginning with a careful 'opening' of the text, he proceeded to the clearance of possible difficulties or objections; next, to a statement of 'uses'; and lastly, to a fervent appeal for acceptance by conscience and heart. He was a passionate, but not an emotional preacher. He seems always to have kept himself well in hand. Though the fire burned with an intense heat, there was no conflagration. It was a clear flame. In his 'Self-Review' (*R.B.*, I, p. 124) – written after he had been silenced in 1662 – he describes his early manner and how it differed from his later. 'When I was young . . . my stile was more extemporate and laxe, but by the advantage of *Affection*, and a very familiar moving Voice and utterance, my preaching then did more affect the Auditory than many of the last years before I gave over preaching; but yet what I delivered was much more raw, and had more Passages that would not bear the Tryal of accurate Judgments; and my discourses had both less *Substance* and less *Judgment* than of late'. This means that his early sermons were not so rich in matter, and showed less regard for orderly arrangement and exact thinking than his later – as was natural; but it does not mean that they were without these qualities. Nay, their presence had been one of the reasons why he was preferred to an older and more experienced man, Mr. Lapthorn.[1] It was the extraordinary fusion of these with Evangelical zeal and moral passion which distinguished him from first to last, but the zeal and passion were more predominant at first. No wonder 'it pleased God to give' him 'much encouragement by the Success of' his 'weak but hearty Labours'. Moreover, it is not surprising to learn that while his converts were of all ages they were most numerous among the young. 'In the place where God most blest my labours (at Kidderminster in Worcestershire) my first and greatest success was upon the Youth. And (what was a marvellous way of Divine mercy) when God had toucht the hearts of young men and girles with a love of goodness and delightful obedience to the truth, the Parents and Grandfathers who had grown old in an ignorant worldly state, did, many of them, fall into liking and love of Piety, induced by their children, whom they perceived to be made by it much wiser and better, and more dutiful to them'.[1]

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[1] His roughness and great immethodicalness and digressions offended the intelligent leading Party' (*R.B.*, I, p. 20).

His own record is the only available source of light on this first stage of his ministry at Kidderminster; and it is not easy to pick out what belongs to the first or to the second stage. What he says, for example, about the multitude of his converts, though the context points to the first stage, is referred by the remark – 'When I had laboured long' – rather to the second. If so, then there is no evidence that his success at first was sensational. It was real and encouraging; but not the marvel it afterwards became. His converts were comparatively few, so that he 'took special note of every one that was humbled, reformed or converted', whereas, later, they were so many that 'I could not' (he says) 'afford time for such particular observations about every one of them, lest I should omit some greater work, but was fain to leave that to their compassionate familiar neighbours, and take notice myself of families and considerable numbers at once, that came in and grew up I scarce knew how'.

Further, it is clear that his success was not uniform. Neither now nor at any time was his hold upon those whom he is too fond of calling the 'rabble' nearly so great as upon the 'sober' and intelligent. They resented his strictness, and he had at first too little of the compassion which flows from the insight of love. He ascribed to wickedness what was largely the effect of ignorance. Hence their attitude became instinctively hostile. On one occasion he was the object of a slander too gross for credence by any decent person. It was started by a 'sot', ran round the alehouses, and 'soon all the drunkards had got it in their mouths'. In self-defence he appealed to the magistrate who bound three or four to their good behaviour and forced the 'sot' to confess that 'he spake it as a Jest'. But the point of interest is that the Rabble 'were glad of the occasion to feed their Malice'.

Another story illustrates the same point. 'The Town having been formerly eminent for Vanity, had yearly a *Shew* in which they brought forth the painted forms of Giants, and such like foolery, to walk about the streets with; and though I said nothing against them, as being simply evil, yet on every one of those Days of Riot, the Rabble of the more vicious sort had still some spleen to vent against me, as one part of their Game'.

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[1] *Compassionate Counsel to all Young Men* . . . 1681, pp. 1–2.

A third story not only illustrates the same point, but also may be said to show that the people had fair excuse for their ill-will. 'Once all the ignorant rout were raging mad against me for preaching the Doctrine of Original Sin to them, and telling them that Infants before Regeneration had so much guilt and corruption as made them loathsome in the Eyes of God: whereupon they vented it abroad in the Country that I preached that God hated, or loathed, Infants; so that they railed at me as I passed through the Streets. The next Lord's Day I cleared and confirmed it, and shewed them that if this were not true their Infants had no need of Christ, of Baptism or of Renewing by the Holy Ghost. And I asked them whether they durst say that their Children were saved without a Saviour, and were no Christians, and why they baptized them, with much more to that purpose; and afterwards they were ashamed and as mute as fishes'. Of course, it was easy for him to win a logical victory; and reduce to silence the human instinct which his doctrine outraged. But the ignorant Rout were for once nearer the truth and wiser than their teacher who, before long, came to see that, in these early days, he had yet much to learn. 'When I was first called forth to the sacred Ministerial work, though my zeale was strong, and I can truly say that a fervent desire of winning souls to God was my motive, yet being young, and of small experience and no great reading . . . I was a Novice in knowledge and my conceptions were uncertain shallow and crude . . . in some mistakes I was confident and of some truths I was very doubtful and suspicious'. Thus he wrote in 1651[1]; and it is one of the first instances of a generous readiness on his part to confess any defect or error which self- (or other) criticism might bring to light.

His troubles, such as they were, did not all come from without. One of the worst was of a kind he could not speak of. This, to his own surprise, was a lapse into scepticism concerning the very foundations of his faith – viz. – 'the certain Truth of the sacred Scriptures, and also the Life to come and Immortality of the soul'. Hitherto he had taken these for granted, or for such 'Common Reasons' as he had not thought it necessary to test. Now, in this sudden uprisal of doubt, the Common Reasons failed him. His doubt was a Samson which broke through them. Some stronger restraint must be forthcoming or he might be dragged into sheer Infidelity. He felt his experience to be a Temptation – nay a 'storm of Temptation'; and 'questioned awhile whether he were indeed a Christian' or whether the fact of his doubts did not prove him to be already a reprobate. The question was how he should face it. Formerly, if any least doubt of the sort assailed him he had 'cast it aside as fitter to be abhorred than considered of'. In this crisis, however, it came home to him that the only safety lay in a policy of thorough. 'I was fain to dig to the very Foundations and seriously to examine the Reasons of Christianity and to give a hearing to all that could be laid against it, that so my faith might be indeed my own. And at last I found that *Nil tam certum quam quod ex dubio certum*, nothing is so firmly believed as that which hath been sometime doubted of'.

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[1] *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership*, p. 1.

Evidently his struggle was a stern one; and fought out to a finish. His doubts never quite left him but his faith found a rational basis from which it could not be moved. At the same time, what best helped him to weather the storm was an inner life which had its root in the obedience of implicit faith. For many years he had acted as if Christianity were true without once supposing the contrary; and the result had been a deepening conviction of its truth because of the light, strength and peace it had brought to him. So he had this to fall back upon as something sure when reason was baffled; and for this he thanked God, who had spared him the Temptation of searching doubt until he was able to bear it. 'Faith' (he says) 'is like a Tree, whose Top is small while the Root is young and shallow; and, therefore, as then it hath but small rooting, so is it not liable to the shaking Winds and tempests as the big and high-grown Trees are. But as the top groweth higher, so the root at once grows greater, and deeper fixed, to cause it to endure its great Assaults' (*R.B.*, I, p. 22).

Many, however, have no background of experience to sustain them under the trial of faith; and, for these, a reasonable defence of faith may be an absolute necessity. Hence it was that from this time forward, Baxter felt it to be a duty – which he must not shirk – to write and preach for the rational character and grounds of the Faith.

3

PERIOD OF SEPARATION (1642–7)

COVENTRY

BAXTER had been at Kidderminster about fifteen months when the quarrel between King and Parliament drew to a head and forced him to declare himself for one side or the other. There could be no doubt of his choice; and in his autobiography he states the reasons of it at great length.[1] But he states them also in a passage of his *Holy Commonwealth*[2]; and does so, in a form which makes them easy to summarize. In bare outline they are as follows:

> (1) A Parliament . . . hath all these four or five capacities.
>   (*a*) It is a Representative of the People as free.
>   (*b*) It representeth the People as Subjects.
>   (*c*) By the constitution, they have part in the sovereignity.
>   (*d*) They are the King's chief Counsellors.
>   (*e*) And they are the King's chief Court of Judicature.
>
> (2) The Laws of England are above the King; and the people's Rights were evidently invaded.
>
> (3) The Parliament did remonstrate to the kingdom . . . and the King's former proceedings afforded so much experience as did make the Parliaments Remonstrance credible. . . . It was time for us to believe a Parliament concerning our danger and theirs, when we heard so many impious persons rage against them; and when the Army, then in the North, was (by the confession of the chief Officers) about to have been drawn up towards *London* – to what end is easie to conjecture when so many Delinquents were engaged and enraged against them, who all took refuge with the King. And when we saw the odious Irish Rebellion broke forth, and so many thousands barbarously murdered, no less (by credible testimony) than a

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[1] *R.B.*, I, pp. 24–40.

[2] (1659) pp. 456–90. It will be seen that he exhibits at the same time, the limits within which he thought resistance to the King should be confined.

hundred and fifty thousand murdered in the one Province of *Ulster* only . . .

(4) We saw the King raise Forces against the Parliament, having forsaken them, and first sought to seize upon their Members, in a way which he confest a breach of their priveledge.

(5) The Parliament did not raise Warre against the *Person or Authority of the King*; nor did I ever serve them on any such account. . . .

(6) I had great reason to believe that if the King had conquered the Parliament, *the Nation had lost all security of their Liberties and been at his mercy*. . . .

(7) . . . It were a wonder if so many humble, honest Christians, fearful of sinning, and praying for direction, should be all mistaken in so weighty a case; and so many *Damn Me's*[1] all in the right. But yet this was not the *Rule* I went by, but *some Motive* on the by.

So that the Cause of the Parliament which they engaged us to defend

(1) Was not the Sovereign Power of the People, as above the King, and the Original of Authority: as if the State of the Commonwealth had been Democratical.

(2) Nor was it to procure a change of the Constitution, and to take down Royalty and the House of Lords; but clean contrary, it was the Defence of the old Constitution against the changes which they affirmed were attempted.

(3) Nor was it the altering of Laws, which is not to be done by force but freely by the Law-givers. And, therefore, it was not to procure a cessation of the Magistrates Power in Religion, for encouraging welldoers, and restraining intollerable Deceivers – which some call *Liberty of Conscience*.

(4) Nor was it to offer any violence to the Person of the King; but to rescue him from them that had seduced him into a Warre against his Parliament to his peril.

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[1] 'The common Souldiers of the King were commonly known wherever they came by horrid Oaths and Curses, being called *Damn-me's*. . . .' (*Ibid.*, p. 479.)

These were the Grounds that we were engaged on; and I knew no other.

On July 16 the King issued Commissions of Array empowering officers appointed by himself to raise troops in his name. 'Next day Newcastle was occupied by his adherents. Lord Herbert and other wealthy Peers poured their private resources into his exchequer, and the Universities sent large contributions. On the other side, the Militia Ordinance was taking effect throughout the Country, at least south of the Humber; and on July 2 the Fleet – a most important factor in the struggle – declared for Parliament and accepted the Earl of Warwick as its Admiral. Ten days later Lord Essex was nominated to the supreme command of the Parliamentary forces, and the members of both Houses swore to live and die with their general "for the true religion, laws, liberties and peace of the Kingdom". On July 15 the first blood was shed at Manchester. The civil war had begun'.[1]

It was just about this date that the Parliament's 'Protestation' of the 12th reached Kidderminster with an order for 'all the people to take it'; and when the Magistrate proceeded to act accordingly, Baxter stood by him. This 'caused some to be offended with' him. His suspected approval of another order 'for the demolishing of all Statues and Images of any of the three Persons in the blessed Trinity, or of the Virgin Mary, which should be found in churches, or on the crosses in churchyards' did more than give offence to some. It brought on almost a riot. For when the Church-warden 'seeing a crucifix upon the cross in the Churchyard' was seen to 'set up a ladder' with intention to remove it, 'a crewe of the drunken riotous Party of the Town (poor Journeymen and servants) took the alarm and ran together with weapons to defend the Crucifix and the Church Images (of which there were divers left since the time of Popery'. Their fury, however, was directed chiefly not against the churchwarden but against the man who was said to have set him to work. For some hours, at least, Baxter thought his life was in danger. If he had met the crowd in the streets he 'had there ended' his 'days'.

Fortunately he 'was walking almost a mile out of Town'; and by the time of his return, the people had gone within doors – from which he heard them cursing him as he passed to his own house. Thus he escaped; but two of his 'neighbours' from 'other Parishes' who, on hearing of his danger, had hurried in to seek, and defend, him were both knocked down and so badly hurt that they 'never perfectly recovered'. He spoke out plainly 'the next Lords day'; and said that, since they sought his blood, he was willing to leave them. 'But the poor sots were so amazed and ashamed that they took on sorrily and were loth to part with me'. As a matter of fact the 'poor sots' were not their own Masters. They were blind agents of the 'violent country gentlemen'. On the whole, all those socially above the 'rabble' in the town were with Baxter; but Bewdley was not; nor was Worcester, or any other part of the county. Along with Herefordshire and Shropshire it was strongly and even fiercely royalist. This being so, the invasion of the town by royalist gentlemen, and their attempt to rouse the populace were a certainty.

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[1] *Cambridge History*, vol. iv, p. 301.

Thus, when one of them rode into the Market place and there read the King's 'Declaration', and Baxter happened to pass, he shouted 'There goeth a Traitor'. From the same quarter came the word '*Down with the Roundheads*', 'in so much that if a Stranger past in many places that had short Hair and a Civil Habit, the Rabble presently cried, "*Down with the Roundheads*", and some they knocked down in the open streets'.

Things came to a head for Baxter when 'the commission of Array was set afoot'. Then 'the rage of the Rioters grew greater than before' and the friends of the Parliament felt helpless: 'for the Parliament meddled not with the Militia of that county, the Lord Howard their Lieutenant not appearing'. In these circumstances Baxter yielded to those who advised him to withdraw for awhile; and 'went to Gloucester' – a city as thoroughly for Parliament as Worcester was for the King. Of the latter's quality he experienced a taste as he rode 'through a corner of the suburbs': for he was greeted with cries of '*Down with the Roundheads*', so that he 'was glad to spur on and be gone'.

He 'found' in Gloucester 'a civil, courteous and religious People as different from Worcester as if they had been under another Government'. He found too, a warm personal welcome, although none of the citizens knew him nor he them; and his kind host was the Town Clerk, Mr Darney. Here he stayed a month. Then, at the entreaty of a deputation from Kidderminster he returned home, only to be driven forth again by the still raging fury of the 'Rabble'. This time he made his way to Inkborough, a small town ten miles east of Worcester; and his first halt was 'with one Mr Hunt' near by. It is possible approximately to fix the date: for while with Mr Hunt he witnessed the fight of Powick Bridge on September 23. A party of the Earl of Essex's army, from Oxford, passed Inkborough on its way to Worcester, the object being to block up the Lord Byron[1] there, 'till the Earl came to take him'. With Hunt, and some other countrymen, Baxter followed; crossed the river below the city; and 'lay in a meadow near Powick above a mile from Worcester' on the West. As he tells the story, 'a messenger came out of Worcester secretly to tell them that the Lord Byron was mounted and ready to be gone'. Thereupon ensued a discussion among the officers whether to leave their ground and start in pursuit, or to wait and see if the message might not be a snare. The former 'prevailed, and over the Bridge they went, being all Horse and Dragoons'. Beyond the Bridge they came to a narrow lane leading into a field where, unobserved, Prince Rupert awaited them. He let half of them stream out and then charged. This threw them back upon those in the lane, and into general confusion. 'Colonel Sands was wounded and taken Prisoner and died of his wounds, and Major Douglas slain, and the rest fled; and though the enemy pursued them no farther than the Bridge yet fled they in grievous terror to Pershore, and the Earl of Essex's life guard lying there took the alarm that the enemy was following them, and away they went'. 'This sight' – moralizes Baxter – 'quickly told me the Vanity of Armies and how little confidence is to be placed in them'. The next day the Earl of Essex arrived at Worcester with his main army, Prince Rupert having 'fetcht off the Lord Byron and marcht away'.

The King was known to be on his way. On September 13 he left Nottingham; on the 20th he occupied Shrewsbury; on October 12 he set out towards Oxford. He chose the route 'through Wolverhampton' and by Kidderminster. Essex, therefore, sent three Regiments to Kidderminster – those of Colonel Essex, the lord Wharton and Sir Henry Cholmeley. He sent, also, Lord Brook with his Regiment to Bewdley. 'Before a feigned advance on the part of Prince Rupert' Lord Brook retired from Bewdley to Kidderminster, with the loss of 'one soldier who fell down the steep cliff into Bewdley Street'.[1] Presently 'some of' the King's 'scouts appeared on the Top of *Kinver Edge*, three miles from *Kidderminster*. The Brigades in *Kidderminster* not knowing but all the King's Army might come that way, marcht off to *Worcester* and in haste left a carriage or two with Arms behind. Some of the inhabitants hasted to the King's soldiers and told them all, which made them come into the Town and take those Arms'.[2]

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[1] He entered Worcester on September 16.

Meanwhile, Baxter spent several agreeable weeks at Worcester. In contrast with the fury of the Kidderminster 'Rabble' and of the King's soldiers, 'the civility of the Earl of Essex's Army was such that among them there was no danger (though none of them knew me)'. Moreover, there were, as Chaplains to the several Regiments, abundance of excellent Divines; and so, much excellent preaching. It was a joy, therefore, to stay 'till the marching of the King's Army occasioned their remove'.

This means that he was in Worcester from September 23 to October 22 – when Essex set out south-east to encounter the King who, avoiding Parliamentary strongholds like Warwick and Coventry, had marched south by Southam and Warmleighton to Edgcote and then west to Edghill. Here on

[1] *Victoria History of Worcester*, vol. iii, p. 164, and J. W. Willis Bund's *Civil War in Worcestershire*, p. 53.

[2] *R.B.*, I, p. 43. From the following it appears that the *general* retreat was made under the command not of Lord Brook but of Lord Wharton: '1642 Oct. 19 sub nocte . . . to Sir William Paston, at Norwich. On Tuesday letters came from my Lord Wharton, that he had made a soldierlike retreat from Kidderminster, excusing his not fighting with Prince Rupert in regard of the inequality of numbers, but it is commonly and confidently reported by others that for haste or fear, he left some waggons and 3 or 4 pieces of ordnance behind him' (*H.M.C. Report*, vii, p. 530).

Sunday 23rd occurred the first great battle of the War, between Edghill and Kineton. On this Sunday Baxter was preaching at Alcester – for his 'Reverend Friend Mr *Samuel Clark*'[1] – and as he was doing so 'the People' (he does not say himself) 'heard the Cannon play and perceived that the Armies were engaged. When Sermon was done (in the Afternoon) the report was more audible, which made us all long to hear of the success. About sunsetting . . . many troops fled through the Town and told us that all was lost on the Parliament side, and the Carriage taken and Waggons plundered before they came away; and none that followed brought any other news. The Townsmen sent a Messenger to *Stratford-upon-Avon* to know the certain truth. About 4 o'clock in the Morning the Messenger returned and told us, That Prince *Rupert* wholly routed the left Wing of the Earl of *Essex's* Army; but while his men were plundering the Waggons, the main Body and the Right Wing routed the rest and the King's Army, took his standard (but it was lost again); killed his General the Earl of *Lindsey* and his Standard bearer; took prisoner the Earl of *Lindsey's* son, the Lord *Willoughby* and others; and lost' (on his part) 'few persons of Quality, and no Nobleman but the Lord St. *John* eldest son to the Earl of *Bullingbrook*; and that the loss of the left Wing was through the Treachery of Sir *Faithful Fortescue*, Major to the Lord *Fielding's* Regiment of Horse, who turned to the King when he should have Charged; and that the victory was obtained principally by Colonel *Hollis's* Regiment of *London* Red-Coats, and the Earl of *Essex's* own Regiment, and Lifeguard, where Sir *Philip Stapleton* and Sir *Arthur Haselriggs*, and Colonel *Urrey* did much. The next morning being willing to see the Field where they had fought, I went to *Edghill*, and found the Earl of *Essex* with the remaining part of his Army keeping the Ground, and the King's Army facing them upon the Hill a mile off; and about a Thousand dead Bodies in the Field between them (and I suppose many were buried before); and neither of the Armies moving toward each other. The

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[1] Rev Samuel Clarke (1599–1683) rector of Alcester – 'drunken Alcester' – since 1633, on the presentation of Lord Brook. (See *D. N. B.*) He went to London soon after the battle and took the Curacy of St. Bennet Fink.

King's Army presently drew off towards *Banbury* and so to *Oxford*. The Earl of *Essex's* Army went back to provide for the wounded, and refresh themselves at *Warwick* Castle (the Lord *Brooks* House)'.

Baxter's case at this time was difficult. He had 'neither money nor friends'. He 'knew not who would receive' him 'to any place of safety'. He had nothing to satisfy any possible host 'for diet and entertainment'. And if Mr Clark had been willing or able to keep him at Alcester it was too dangerous – since 'Soldiers on one side or other would be frequently' about, and such as he 'must be still at the Mercy of every furious Beast that would make a prey of' them. At last he let himself be persuaded to go to Coventry where the Minister, Mr Simon King, was one whose acquaintance he had made when 'sometime Schoolmaster at Bridgnorth'. So to Coventry he went 'with a purpose to stay there till one side or other had got the Victory, and the War was ended, and then to return home again'. This, he felt sure, would soon happen. 'For so wise in Matters of War was I, and all the country besides, that we commonly supposed that a very few days or weeks by *one other* Battel would end the War; and I believe that no small number of the Parliament men had no more wit than to think so too'.

At the end of a month with Mr King, and no sign of peace, the question 'what course to take' again urged itself. The answer came in an unexpected manner. For he was desired by 'the Committee and Governour of the City' 'to stay with them and lodge in the Governour's House and preach to the Soldiers'.

He accepted the offer gladly, but made a condition that he should not be required to take a commission as Chaplain. He did this out of consideration for the nominal Chaplain, Mr Aspinall, of whom the committee, not liking him, made no use; and, to soothe the neglected man's 'jealousy', he engaged to do nothing more than preach 'a sermon once or twice a week to the Garrison'. Nor would he take any payment except his 'Diet only' and free residence in the Governor's house. In addition he preached once on the Lord's Day to the People. Thus circumstanced, he 'lived and followed his studies as quietly as in a time of peace for about a year'.

Coventry indeed, was a city of Refuge for molested or distressed Parliamentarians, especially ministers, of whom about thirty (says Baxter) 'had fled thither for safety from soldiers and Popular Fury as I had done, though they never meddled with the Wars'. Besides these, there were many 'very godley and judicious Gentlemen, as Sir Richard Skeffinton (d. 1649) '(a most noble man), Colonel Bosvile, Mr Mackworth, etc.' He speaks as if Clergy and laymen alike belonged to his weekly 'Judicious auditory'; and says 'I have cause of continual thankfulness to God for the quietness and safety and sober wise religious company, with liberty to preach the Gospel, which he vouchsafed me in this city when other places were in the Terrors and Flames of War'. There was a touch of home, too, in the fact that some of his hearers were friends from Kidderminster. He calls them 'the Religious part of' his 'neighbours at Kidderminster' who had been driven thence by the same sort of violence as he himself had to suffer or fear. They 'would fain have lived quietly at home but were forced (the chiefest of them) to be gone'. So 'to Coventry they came; and some of them that had any estate of their own, lived there on their own charge', while 'the rest were fain to take up Arms and be Garrison soldiers[1] to get them bread'.

Hereupon Baxter expresses the conviction, which he never found reason to change, that 'the Great Cause of the Parliament's strength and the King's ruine' lay in the resentment and disgust evoked by the treatment of 'all that were called *Puritans*' i.e. of all that were of a strict and pious life. 'Upon my certain knowledge this was it that filled the Armies and Garrisons of the Parliament with sober pious Men. Thousands had no mind to meddle with the Wars, but greatly desired to live peaceably at home, when the Rage of Soldiers and Drunkards would not suffer them; some stayed till they had been imprisoned; some till they had been plundered perhaps twice or thrice over, and nothing left them; some were quite tired out with the abuse of all Comers that quartered on them: and some by the insolency of their Neighbours; but most were afraid of their Lives; and so they sought refuge in the Parliaments Garrisons'.[1] A particular case which came home to him was that of his own father. 'In *Shropshire* where my Father dwelt' (Eaton Constantine) 'both he and all his Neighbours that were noted for praying and hearing a Sermon, were plundered by the King's Soldiers, so that some of them had almost nothing but Lumber left in their Houses: though my Father was so far from medling on either side that he knew not what they were doing, but followed his own business'.

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[1] The Coventry Garrison consisted (1) half of citizens and (2) half of 'countrymen' from Bremicham (Birmingham), Sutton-Coldfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton, Hinckley, Rugby, etc.

He mentions this in connection with the settlement of a Garrison at Wem – a little Town eight miles from Shrewsbury – by Colonel Mitton and other Shropshire Gentlemen. Colonel Mackworth's Troop at Coventry was to join them; and Baxter, mainly for the sake of being near his father and relieving him if possible, went with the Troop.[2]

His account of what followed, how they began to fortify Wem; how Sir William Brereton brought his Cheshire Trained Bands to help them; how these were drawn off to defend Nantwich and the surrounding villages against a sudden raid by Lord Capel; how, in their absence, the royalist commander turned back on Wem; how a mere handful of men[3] held the position all night, beating off fierce assaults once and again; and how, in the early morning, the Cheshire men reappeared and completed his repulse, is the vivid story of an eye-witness. The end of the adventure answered its purpose: for the Garrison was settled. As to Baxter himself, he accompanied the Cheshire men to Nantwich and in their return march to Wem, where, or at Longford, he stayed for two months. His father, it turned out, was in prison at Lillshull and him he was able to 'redeem'. Then he returned to his 'old Habitation and Employment' at Coventry and followed his 'studies in quietness for another year'. The excursion had done him good. 'Whilst I rode up and down' – he says – 'my Body had more Health than of a long time before'. But another year of sedentary life – combined with his 'grief at the Calamitous Condition of the Land' – so sapped his strength that he was fain to put himself for a considerable time 'under the cure of Sir Theodore Meyern' in London.[1]

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 44. There was another side which Baxter did not see. For example, 'In spite of all that Essex could do, the Royalist gentry in the neighbourhood of Worcester shared the fate of their opponents round Shrewsbury' (Gardner, *History of the Civil War*, vol. i, p. 37). But this was at the outset of the War (1642) and appears to have been neither common nor continuous. Baxter, too, admits that 'some of the King's Gentry and Superior Officers' were civil enough; and supposes that the King did not know the facts.

[2] He was urged to go by Colonel Mackworth so as 'to get some of his' (Shrewsbury) 'neighbours thither', who (it was known) would follow him, 'which they did to the number of 30 or 40'; and, when *he* returned, they 'would not stay behind' – a remarkable illustration of his personal influence on men who knew him well.

[3] Led by 'Col Hunt a plain Hearted, honest, godly man entirely beloved by the soldiers for his Honesty'.

What he means by the 'Calamitous condition of the Land' he makes clear. 'While I lived here in Peace and Liberty, as Men in a dry House do hear the Storms abroad so did we daily hear the News of one Fight or other, or one Garrison or other won or lost; the two *Newbery* Fights, *Gloucester Siege*, the marvellous Sieges of *Plimouth*, *Lime* and *Taunton*, *Sir William Waller's* successes and losses, the Loss at *Newark*, the slaughter at *Bolton*, the greatest Fight of all at *York*, with abundance more. So that hearing such sad News on one side or other was our daily Work, insomuch that as duly as I wakened in the Morning I expected to hear one come and tell me, *Such a Garrison is won or lost*, or *such a Defeat received or given*. And *do you HEAR THE News* was commonly the first Word I heard. So miserable were those bloody Days, in which he was the most honourable that could kill most of his enemies'.

One of these events was the 'Surprize of Shrewsbury'; and in this he rejoiced not only because it was a victory for the Parliament but also because it was gained 'without loss of blood'[2] and ensured the safety of his father as well as that of many old and dear friends. His father had gone there from Lillshull and was safe enough while Sir Fulk Hunkes, his wife's brother, was Governor in 1643. But Sir Fulk, though a

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[1] This visit would be about October 1644, as the previous October seems to have been the date of the settlement of the Wem Garrison. (See Gardiner's *History of the Civil War*, vol. i, p. 290.) Baxter speaks of the visit as 'long.' So that he may have been in London till Christmas.

[2] Two men fell on the Parliamentary side and six on the King's, but the former took many Prisoners.

Royalist, was not in favour with the 'Gentlemen of the Country, and they procured him to be removed'. His successors – first Sir Francis Ottley[1] and then Sir Michael Earnley – were (according to Baxter) drunken and careless; and therefore, sure (said Sir Fulk) to lose the town. But the change at first turned to the advantage of Baxter Senior. For he was made one of the Collectors of Taxes for the King. When, however, he 'would not forcibly distrain of them that refused to pay, as not knowing but they might hereafter recover it all of him' he 'was laid in Prison by them that swore he should lie and rot there'. And in prison he was found by the Parliamentary soldiers 'a few weeks' later. On Saturday morning about five o'clock of February 22, 1645, a force of 1,200 men under the command of Colonel Mitton, operating from Wem by order of Sir William Brereton – 'Commander-in-Chief of the Cheshire forces' – made a surprise attack upon the Town. It was taken at once, without the loss of a man on the attacking side, while 'the Prisoners' – says a dispatch of the same day – 'are many and considerable, and the prize great, Sir Michael Earnley, Sir John Wylde and divers other. The Town is rich, and it is said all the Prince's treasure and carriages were left there'. As to Baxter Senior his son writes – 'The Keeper' of the Prison 'came to him in the night and beg'd his Favour to save him and his House, for the Parliaments souldiers had surprised the Town. My Father would not believe it, till he heard and saw that which compelled his Belief; and with what Joy I need not tell'.[2]

In the course of his second year at Coventry he seems to have had his first taste of controversy. It arose through the intrusion among an otherwise remarkably sound and sober Garrison of 'one or two' 'out of New England' ('of Sir Henry Vane's Party there') and 'one Anabaptist, named Taylor'. They 'had almost troubled all the Garrison'; but in the end 'found not that success in Coventry as they had done in Cromwell's Army'. Publicly and privately he refuted, or incited others to refute them. In public he preached 'over all the Controversies against the Anabaptists first, and then against the Separatists'. In private (no doubt at his instance) 'some of' his 'Worcestershire neighbours and many of the Foot Soldiers were able to baffle both Separatists, Anabaptists, and Antinomians; and so kept all the Garrison sound'.[1]

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[1] Baxter says Sir *Richard Oatley*.

[2] 'An invaluable position on the Severn was thus acquired by the Parliament. Unfortunately the Victory was stained by the Execution of a dozen Irish prisoners in accordance with the recent Ordinance' (Gardner, u. s., vol. ii, p. 132). The ordinance of October 24, 1644, ran – 'Every Irishman taken either at sea or on land, in England or Wales, should be put to death without mercy . . .'

[1] In 1650 he sent a copy of his Saint's Rest to the Mayor and Corporation who acknowledged the gift in a highly complimentary strain and reciprocated it by the present of 'A silver Colledge Cup' 'having the elephant (this city's Arms) engraven thereon'. (See Appendix III.)

It appears from a letter dated July 15, 1651 (vol. ii, f. 226 of the corporation correspondence) that Baxter, writing to express his gratitude for so unusual a 'testimony of favourable respect', 'sent the second and more perfect edition of his book to be substituted for the former'. A note is added by Tho. Sharp, '1651, Treasurer's accounts': 'Pd. for a Colledge Cup and cutting the Cities Arms on it given to Mr Baxter, £4 2*s*.' I owe this information to the courteous kindness of the Town Clerk, Mr George Sutton, who says, further, that the resolution of the corporation to hand down the copy or copies of 'the Saint's Rest' from Mayor to Mayor fell through long ago; and that the book has gone astray with others. For an expression of Baxter's warm affection for Coventry, see 'dedication' of 'Saint's Rest' Pt. III. Another copy (also the 2nd edition) which Baxter presented to the High Bailiff of Kidderminster has been more fortunate and is to-day carefully preserved in the Mayor's Parlour. Baxter's autograph inscription is as follows: 'This Booke being devoted, as to the service of the Church of Christ in general, so the more especially to the Church at Kederminster, the Author desireth that this coppy may be still' (i.e. always) 'in the custodye of the high Bayliff: and entreateth them carefully to read and practice it, and beseecheth the Lord to blesse it to their true Reformation, Consolation and Salvation. Rich. Baxter.

4

WITH THE ARMY

BAXTER's departure from Coventry at the end of two and a half years was occasioned by the political and military transactions of 1644–5. Of these, therefore, he gives an account – particularly of what led to the coming of the Scots and the creation of the 'New Model'. But our present concern is to show how he was drawn into the Army; and we cannot improve upon his own narrative: – When the news of Naseby (June 16, 1645) reached him he set out 'two days after the fight' to Naseby field; and thence to the Army's quarters before Leicester to ascertain the fate of 'two or three that of old had been' his 'intimate Friends in Cromwell's Army'. 'When I found them I stayed with them a night and I understood the state of the Army much better than ever I had done before. We that lived quietly in Coventry did keep to our old Principles, and thought all others had done so too, except a very few inconsiderable Persons. We were unfeignedly for King and Parliament. We believed that the War was only to save the Parliament and Kingdom from Papists and Delinquents and to remove the Dividers, that the King might again return to his Parliament; and that no Changes might be made in Religion but by the Laws which had his free consent. We took the true happiness of King and People, Church and State, to be our end, and so we understood the Covenant, engaging both against Papists and Schismaticks. And when the Court News-book told the World of the Swarms of Anabaptists in our Armies, we thought it had been a meer lye, because it was not so with us, nor in any of the Garrison or Country Forces about us. But when I came to the Army among *Cromwell's* Soldiers, I found a new face of things, which I never dreamt of. I heard the plotting Heads very hot upon that which intimated their Intention to subvert both Church and State. Independency and Anabaptistry were most prevalent. Antinomianism and Arminianism were equally distributed; and *Thomas Moor's* Followers (a Weaver of *Wisbitch* and *Lyn*, of excellent Parts) had made some shifts to joyn these two Extreams together. Abundance of the common

Troopers and many of the Officers, I found to be honest, sober, Orthodox Men, and others tractable – ready to hear the Truth and of upright Intentions. But a few proud self-conceited, hot-headed Sectaries had got into the highest places, and were *Cromwell's* chief Favourites, and by their very heat and activity bore down the rest, or carried them along with them and were the Soul of the Army, though much fewer in number than the rest (being indeed not one in twenty throughout the Army . . .)'.[1]

The conclusion suggested to Baxter by all this was that the Ministers were chiefly to blame, and not least himself. 'I saw that it was the Ministers that had lost all by forsaking the Army and betaking themselves to an easier and quieter way of life'. Note has been taken of the Chaplains attached to the Earl of Essex's regiments when the Army was at Worcester. But 'at Edgehill Fight almost all of them went home'. Then, later, they were averse from returning for several reasons – one being the fact that 'they had little Invitation', and might look rather for 'contempt and opposition' than for 'welcome'. Another was just the fact which (thinks Baxter) ought to have constrained them to return in spite of all difficulties and dangers – viz. – the increase of sectaries.

For in the simplicity of his belief that rational argument could overthrow the strongest fastnesses of error, he felt sure that the sectaries must have gone down before the onset of the chaplains. 'Their Worth and Labour, in a patient self-denying way, had been like to have preserved most of the Army and to have defeated the Contrivances of the Sectaries, and to have saved the King, the Parliament and the Land. And if it had brought Reproach upon them from the Malitious (who called them *Military Levites*) the Good which they had done would have wiped off the blot much better than the contrary course would do'. Too late, alas! was any effort of Chaplains now, even if all the best Preachers of the land had gone to the work. So Baxter feared; and the keen regret, born of that thought, held in it keen self-blame. He recalled a time when Cromwell 'lay at Cambridge, long before, with that famous Troop which he began his Army with'; and how 'His Officers proposed to make their Troop a gathered Church'; and how 'they all subscribed an Invitation to' him 'to be their Pastor'; and how he 'sent them a Denial reproving their Attempt' and telling 'them wherein' his 'Judgment was against the Lawfulness and Convenience of their way'. That was in his early days at Coventry; and he heard no more about it until he met Cromwell by chance at Leicester. Then Cromwell's expostulation with him 'for denying of them', and his own awakened sense of the consequences of his action, moved him to sadness. 'For then all the fire was in one spark'.

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[1] *R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 50.

Nevertheless, it was borne in upon him that even at the eleventh hour something might be done; and so, though 'loth to leave' his 'Studies and Friends and Quietness' at Coventry, when Colonel Whalley (at the instance of Captain Evanson) invited him to be Chaplain to his regiment – said to be 'the most religious, most valiant, most successful of all the army' – he dared not refuse. He asked 'but a few days to deliberate' and consult his friends.

This took place at Leicester. Hastening, therefore, to Coventry his first step was to call 'together an Asembly' of Ministers to whom he related 'the sad news of the corruption of the Army' and his fears of worse to come, and his own great anxiety to be of some use. 'For my part' – said he – 'I know that my Body is so weak that it is like to hazard my Life to be among them, and I expect their Fury should do little less than rid me out of the way; and I know one Man cannot do much upon them; but yet if your Judgment take it to be my Duty, I will venture my Life among them and perhaps some other Ministers may be drawn in, and then some more of the Evil may be prevented'.

The ministers (thirty?) were unanimous for his going, but if he had hoped that some would volunteer to do likewise he was disappointed. His next step was to consult the Committee, who sent him on to the Governor 'saying, That if he consented they would not hinder' him. The Governor was Colonel Barker M.P. who was 'just then to be turned out by the Self-denying Vote'. 'In his discontent' – says Baxter rather unkindly – 'he was content that I should go out with him that he might be mist the more, and so he gave me his consent'. But this was not the end of the matter. Baxter thought it was; and forthwith sent word to Colonel Whalley that 'God Willing' he would be with him on the morrow. Colonel Willoughby, however, who stepped at once into Colonel Barker's place, was not of the same mind. Nay, 'he was much displeased'; and the soldiers, too, 'were so much offended with the Committee for consenting to' his 'going that the Committee all met again in the Night and sent for' him 'and told "him" he must not go'. They told him even 'that the Soldiers were ready to mutiny against them and they could not satisfie them and, therefore', he 'must stay'. He answered, in effect, that he had promised and could not draw back; that, virtually at least, they had given their consent; and that after all, he was a free man – not bound to consult them though he had done so and meant to respect their opinion. But this did not appease them. 'In a word, they were so angry with me that I was fain to tell them all the truth of my Motives[1] and Designs, what a case I perceived the Army to be in, and that I was resolved to do my best against it'. While Baxter in his vehement way was descanting thus on the Army, one of the Committee pulled him up. 'Magisterially' – he said – 'Let me hear no more of that. If Noll *Cromwell* should hear any Soldier speak but such a word, he would cleave his crown. You do them wrong. It is not so'. In the end he 'parted with those that had been' his 'very great Friends in some displeasure'; and 'the soldiers threatened to stop the Gates and keep' him 'in'. 'But being honest understanding men' he was able to bring them round to his standpoint; and then 'some of them accompanied "him" on his way'.

The member of Committee who had interrupted him was Colonel William Purefoy, 'a Parliament man', and in Cromwell's confidence. This was unfortunate for Baxter, since he found on his arrival at Head-quarters that Purefoy had got there before him and made mischief. 'As soon as I came to the Army *Oliver Cromwell* coldly bid me welcome and never spake one word to me more while I was there; nor once all that time vouchsafed me an Opportunity to come to the Head Quarters where the Councils and Meetings of the Officers were, so that most of my design was thereby frustrated. And his Secretary gave out that there was a Reformer come to the Army to undeceive them, and to save Church and State, with some such other jeers . . . but Colonel *Whalley* welcomed me, and was the worse thought on for it by the rest of the Cabal'.

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[1] As he had told the Ministers?

For the next eighteen months Baxter shared the life of his Regiment.[1] He went with it into the West against the only army – that of Goring – which the King still had in the field. He was an eye-witness of the fight at Langport (July 10) which drove Goring's Army into Bridgwater; and Goring himself farther West to Exeter. Bridgwater, falsifying the forecast of its ability to resist a long siege, 'was taken by storm after two days'. Baxter was here also, along with the Rev Hugh Peters who 'being come to the Army from London but a day before, went presently back with the news of Goring's Rout, and an Hundred pounds Reward was voted to himself for bringing the news'. Baxter's summary of the further events which fell under his notice is somewhat confused – probably because he wrote it from memory long after. Thus, he dates the taking of Sherborne Castle (August 15) after instead of before the capture of Bristol (September 11); and makes Fairfax move straight to the latter from Bridgwater 'taking Nancy Castle and Bath in the way'. He also speaks of the siege of Bristol as lasting 'about a month' instead of seventeen days (August 23 – September 11). For the first three days of the siege he was present. Then, however, he fell sick of a fever and had to retire to Bath 'where Dr Venner[2] was' his 'careful Physician'. 'Macerated and weak' he was able to return three or four days before the end; and so 'saw the final storm, by which the

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[1] Among the Baxter MSS. there is a notebook inscribed 'Ri Baxter 1638' which, with other interesting entries, has this at the end: – 'Frō ye 19th of July 1645 to ye 15 of June 1647 (being absent 42 daies) for 873 daies at 2s ye diem (due) £87 6 0'. During which time he received 'for 378 daies' at 2s per diem £37 16 0: 'So there remaineth to ye establishment of Jan 1st £49 10'. There is some obscurity here; but it seems clear that Baxter as chaplain had the promise of 2*s*. a day; that he was actually paid at this rate for 378 days, and that he had an unpaid claim for 495 days at the same rate, or £49 10*s*. This makes his engagements as Chaplain extend over two years and five months – not counting the six weeks absence; and it is difficult to fit this in with known facts, or his statement 'from the 19th of July 1645 to the 15 of June 1647'.

[2] See *D. N. B.*

Outworks being taken, Prince Rupert yielded up the City upon terms that he might march away with his soldiers, leaving their Ordnance and Arms'. While a part of the Army with Cromwell moved eastward to clear up strong places like the Castle of Devizes (September 23) and Longford House, Nr. Salisbury (October 5) and Winchester Castle (October 5) and, above all, Basing House (October 14), the rest of the Army under Fairfax 'marched down again towards the Lord Goring and' (when his work eastward was done) 'Cromwell came after them'. The task of finishing off the Royalist troops was greatly facilitated (thinks Baxter) by their unbridled excesses. 'We found that above all other Armies of the King his' (Goring's) 'soldiers were most hated by the People for their incredible Prophaneness and their unmerciful Plundering (many of them being Foreigners)'. At one time he was quartered with a sober Gentleman at South Pederton in Somersetshire – who assured him that he had himself seen a company of Goring's men in his own house prick their fingers and let the Blood flow into their cups and then drink a Health to the Devil. 'No place could I come to' – he says – 'but their horrid Impiety and Outrages made them Odious'.

Exeter, to which Goring and his horse had fled, was the first objective; and thither 'the Army marched by Hunnington'. The siege began in November 1645 and lasted till April 9, 1646. But Baxter was not required to stay it out. In about three weeks Whalley's Regiment and some others were sent back towards Oxford. 'In the extream winter' they 'quartered about six weeks in Buckinghamshire'. The particular spot was Agmondesham. Agmondesham is a hamlet near Chesham (about 30 miles East of Oxford) which had become, it seems, the local centre of 'some sectaries'. These, in defiance of Dr Crook the minister and his curate Mr Richardson, took possession of the Parish Church and announced a public conference. One Bramble (or Bramley), 'an Ignorant sectarian Lecturer' was their leader, and sympathizers from among the soldiers were eager to back him up. Accordingly 'when their publick talking Day came' Bethel's (or rather Pitchford's) Troopers and other sectaries appeared in full force. But Baxter also appeared. The purpose of the former was to 'confirm the

Chesham men'; the purpose of the latter was to confound them. This he thought to be his duty; and 'divers sober officers' who accompanied him, thought so, too. 'I took the Reading Pew and *Pitchford's* Cornet and Troopers took the Gallery. And there I found a crowded Congregation of poor well-meaning People, that came in the Simplicity of their Hearts to be deceived. There did the Leader of the *Chesham* Men begin, and afterwards *Pitchford's* Soldiers set in, and I alone disputed against them from Morning until almost Night, for I knew their trick, that if I had but gone out first, they would have prated what boasting words they listed when I was gone, and made the People believe that they had baffled me, or got the best; therefore I stayed it out till they first rose and went away. The abundance of Nonsense which they uttered that day may partly be seen in Mr *Edwards's Gangræna*: for when I had wrote a Letter of it to a friend in *London*, that and another were put into Mr *Edwards's* Book, without my Name'.[1]

Of course, Dr Crook and Mr Richardson gave him 'much thanks', and it was natural that 'some of the sober People of Agmondisham should be profusely grateful for that day's work'. But what real good it did, was another question.

At the end of the six weeks in Buckinghamshire Whalley was 'sent to lay siege to Banbury Castle where Sir William Compton was Governor who had wearied out one long siege before'. Nor did he yield to Whalley 'for above two months'; then it was the turn of Worcester. Baxter was in camp all the time at Banbury and for a week or two at Worcester. There he fell ill again and went up to London to consult Sir Theodore Mayern who sent him to Tunbridge Wells 'to try the Waters'. 'After some stay there' to his 'benefit', he 'went back to London'; but returned to his regiment in time for the closing act of the siege.[2]

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 56. The second edition of the *Gangræna* was enlarged, if not enriched thereby. See 'A copie of a Letter written from a godly Minister then in the Army' (June 3, 1646) (*Gangræna*, Pt. III, pp. 45–6).

[2] Baxter's presence flashes out in a curious scene. 'On 17 June, about three oclock, the Governor Washington, with many Gentlemen and 100 horse, went out with the corpse' (of an officer desired by the besiegers for burial) 'to the foot of Roger's Hill'. Here familiar and friendly 'speeches' passed between them and

Worcester surrendered on July 2, 1646: the honour of it (asserts Baxter) being snatched from Whalley, at the last moment by 'Cromwell's connivance,' and given to Colonel Rainsborough[1] 'who was sent from Oxford' (which was yielded on June 26) 'with some regiments of Foot, to command in chief, partly that he might have the honour of taking the city and partly that he might be Governor there (and not Whalley) when the city was surrendered'. Whalley (though not really such) 'was called a Presbyterian'; Rainborough was a great man among the sectaries. This (thinks Baxter) explained the arrangement. It was meant 'to gratifie the sectaries and settle the City and country' (county) 'in their way'. In the sequel the scheme failed, inasmuch as 'the Committee of the county were for Whalley and lived in distaste with Rainsborough; and the sectaries prospered there no further than Worcester city itself (a Place which deserved such a Judgment)'. As for 'All the country' (county) it remained 'free from their infection'.

On his return to Worcester from London he found that his quarters as Chaplain were at Rous Lench – some twelve miles East of Worcester – in the house of Sir Thomas Rous: one of the memorable places in connection with Baxter. He had never been there before; but was perhaps better known than he supposed. At any rate, Lady Rous, – 'a godly, grave, understanding woman' – entertained him 'not as a soldier but as a friend'. This first visit was brief. For, still at the service of his regiment, he presently moved East and north into Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Unfortunately he names none of the places *en route* where he halted, but indicates that, whenever possible, he took occasion to preach. 'One advantage by this moving life I had, that I had opportunity to preach in many countreys' (counties) 'and Parishes;

'several gentlemen' of the other side 'and amongst the rest Dr Warmstry singled out the Chaplain of their Regiment, Mr. Baxter, to discourse with him'. He proposed a debate there and then on the question 'that there was no difference to be made between a Church and any other common place'. Mr Baxter undertook to support this and Dr Warmstry to disprove it. They did so, with the result that they agreed to confess their difference to be 'in terms' only and not 'in sense'. At least this was Baxter's opinion according to Warmstry, who took rather copious notes. (*Townshend's Diary*, pp. 122–4.)

[1] See *D. N. B.*

and whatever came of it afterward I know not; but, at the present, they commonly seemed to be much affected'.

Coming at length 'to our Major *Swallow's* Quarters at Sir *John Cook's* House at *Melbourne* in the edge of *Darbyshire* beyond *Ashby-de-la-Zouch* in a cold and snowy season' he came to the end of his endurance. His collapse was complete. 'The cold, together with other things coincident, set my Nose on bleeding. When I had bled about a quart or two, I opened four Veins, but it did no good. I used divers other Remedies for several days to little purpose; at last I gave myself a Purge which stopped it. This so much weakened me and altered my Complexion, that my Acquaintance who came to visit me scarce knew me. Coming after so long weakness, and frequent loss of Blood before, it made the Physicians conclude me deplorate after it was stopped, supposing I should never escape a Dropsy'.[1]

He accepted this sudden breakdown of his plans for further work in the Army, as a divine interposition.

When the siege was over he had enjoyed a short leave of absence in a visit to his friends at Kidderminster and found them taking his immediate return to them for granted – 'now that the county was cleared'. But he had to tell them that he could not see his way. He must consider whether it might not be his Duty to stay with the Army. He was almost sure it was. So he put them off. Then he 'went to Coventry and called the Ministers again together' for advice. He told them, as he had done before, that the forsaking of the Army by the old Ministers, and the neglect of supplying their Places by others had undone us[2]; that he had done his best and with some very limited success – none at all in respect of the army as a whole; that, while the sectaries were indeed few among the common soldiers, their leaders were so industrious and were becoming so numerous in the higher commands – thanks to Cromwell – that 'they were like to have their own will'. And what he took to be their will might well seem appalling. It came to this – they meant to 'pull down all that stood in their way in State and Church, both King, Parliament and Ministers and set up themselves'. Moreover, he had but little doubt of their success, and small hope of being able to change their purpose 'by contradicting them or drawing off the soldiers from them'. On the other hand, he had a clear prevision of his own danger. To do what he intended to do would be to court 'the greatest hazard of his life'. But he was ready to risk it if the opinion of the ministers coincided with his own conviction. Apparently it did. For 'they all voted' him 'to go and leave Kidderminster yet longer, which accordingly' he 'did'.

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 58.

[2] 'The private soldiers might easily have been led into the stricter way, if the orthodox Chaplains had stayed with the regiments and if Parliament had paid the men their arrears. But the Presbyterian Clergy had hurried back from the hardships of the campaign to secure the tithes and rectories from which the Anglicans were being turned out' (Trevelyan – *England under the Stuarts*, p. 280).

But this could hardly be true of the thirty Ministers who had taken refuge in Coventry.

But then came his breakdown; and, happening just when it did, he could not doubt its significance as a 'determination of God'. 'For the very time that I was bleeding the Council of War sat at *Nottingham* where (as I have credibly heard) they first began to open their Purposes and act their Part; and, presently after, they entered into their Engagement at *Triploe-Heath*. And as I perceived it was the will of God to let them go on, so I afterward found that this great Affliction was a Mercy to myself, for they were so strong and active that I had been likely to have lost my life among them in their Fury. And thus I was finally separated from the Army'.[1]

In another way the evil turned to good. For it was the occasion of his writing the *Saints Everlasting Rest*. He began it during his three weeks' stay in Sir John Cook's house at Melbourne; followed it up during another three weeks' stay in Mr Nowell's house at Kirby-Mallory, Leicestershire; and finished at least the first part during a three months' residence under the friendly roof of Rous Lench. Lady Rous may have noticed his state of weakness when he left; and may have taken pains to keep in touch with him. Anyhow, tidings of his illness reached her. She sent a servant to seek him out. When he returned saying that he was far off and could not be found, she sent him again with strict orders to find him wherever he might be. This time, therefore, the messenger traced him to Kirby-Mallory; and, 'in great weakness' Baxter 'made shift' to go back with him. Rous Lench Court was an ideal shelter for such an invalid. He could breathe the purest air, enjoy the most complete retirement, and meditate in a perfect stillness; while, if he had strength to walk, there were fine avenues near by, and wide spaces of gently undulating land beyond. Not far off, too, was the little Church and its solemn peace. All this helped him, no doubt; but what helped him most, and was ever afterwards recalled with deep gratitude, was the tender care of Sir Thomas and his wife. He gave some expression to it in the letter with which he addressed to them the first part of his book. 'Common ingenuity commandeth me thankfully to acknowledge that when you heard I was suddenly cast into extreme weakness you sent into several Counties to seek me in my quarters, and missing of me, sent again to fetch me to your house, where for many months I found an Hospital, a Physician, a Nurse and real friends, and (which is more than all) daily and importunate prayers for my recovery, and, since I went from you, your kindnesses still following me in abundance. And all this for a man that was a stranger to you, whom you had never seen before, but among soldiers to burden you'.

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 59. What Baxter calls the 'engagement at Triploe Heath' (a few miles south of Cambridge) took place on June 10, 1647. His mention of Nottingham is, I think, a mistake for Newmarket. A clear account of the Army's doings at this time (summer of 1647) is given by Professor Firth in his preface to vol. i of *The Clarke Papers*, Printed for the Camden Society 1891.

In these months of enforced seclusion he did not wish – though he expected – to die. 'Being conscious' – he says – 'that my time had not been improved to the Service of God as I desired it had been, I put up many an earnest Prayer to God that he would restore me and use me the more successfully in his Work'.[1]

In this spirit of renewed consecration he resettled at Kidderminster, probably about June 1647.

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 79.

5

SECOND PERIOD

(1647–60)

THE circumstances attending his resettlement deserve careful notice. As already said, after Worcester siege was over (July 1646) he made a flying visit to Kidderminster and found that his 'old Flock expected' his immediate return. His decision to continue with the army yet awhile damped their hope, but his 'providential' illness revived it. It was not difficult to get news of him at Rous Lench; and (says he) 'Whilst I there continued weak and unable to Preach the People at *Kidderminster* had again renewed their Articles against their old Vicar and his Curate; and, upon Trial of the Cause, the Committee sequestred the Place, but put no one into it, but put the Profits into the Hands of divers of the Inhabitants to pay a Preacher till it were disposed of. They sent to me, and desired me to take it, in case I were again enabled to Preach; which I flatly refused; and told them, I would take only the Lecture, which by his own Consent and Bond I held before'.[1] What I take to be the original letter of invitation sent to Baxter at Rous Lench on this occasion is extant among the Baxter MSS. and is as follows: –

'WORTHY SIR, –

'Our place being now vacant and we destitute of faithful labourers in the work of the Ministry, from the experience we have had of God's blessing upon your labours formerly among us, (we) doe with mutuale consent make choyse of you for our Minister to preach the Gospell amongst us, and, therefore, doe humbly and earnestly entreate you to put on the bowells of compassion towards us (being as sheep without a Shepherd) to return unto us before the next Sabbath, and to bestow your labours amongst us who love and honnor you, and shall to our power, be ready to afford you all due encouragement and assistance in the work of God. In hope of a cheerfull assenting answer, we remayne your trulie affectionate friends'.

It is signed by Richard Hunt, Bailiff; William Browne,

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 79. The committee referred to was the county committee for religion.

Justice, and 263 others, including forty-five soldiers and ten widows, the only women in the list.

Not a few of the names such as Radford, Pearsall, Butcher, Payne, Pagett, Talbot, Best, Price still have their representatives (and perhaps in some cases, direct descendants) in the Town or Parish. The most conspicuous name is that of Doolittle which is attached to ten different persons, one being 'Widdow Doolittle'. So far as I am aware, there is none of this name now, nor of Freeston, the second most frequent. Very suggestive is the breach of rule and order implied by the addition of the widows. May it not be said for certain that they were the wives of men who had fallen in the War? Nothing else seems to explain their presence. And the soldiers – who were they? Who but the ex-service men returned home at the close of the first Civil War? And why did they sign the call in a group by themselves?[1] A letter written by Baxter twelve years later tells us. But we will turn to this presently.

Unfortunately the letter of invitation is not dated; but the time would be in the early spring of 1647. For, after about five months at Rous Lench, when he felt able to go abroad, i.e. in June or July, he went to Kidderminster and threshed things out on the spot. Again the People vehemently urged him to take the Vicarage, and, again, he 'denied'. He would come – it was his heart's desire to come; but it must be on his own terms which were these: – that he should have his old Lecturer's place; Maintenance raised to £100 a year and a House; and a promise on their part 'to submit to that doctrine of Christ which, as their Minister, he should deliver to them, proved by the Holy Scriptures'. As to the maintenance, he stipulated that it 'should neither come out of their own Purses, nor any more of it out of the Tithes save the £60 which the Vicar had before bound himself to pay'. How then was the extra £40 to be raised? He undertook to obtain it from the London Committee; and expected to succeed, because he meant it not for himself but for the support of work at Mitton ('a Chappell in the Parish'). It would seem as if the Trustees,[2] while drawing no more than £60 from the Tithes, volunteered a pledge to pay Baxter £100 irrespective of any 'augmentation'. If so they promised what they did not, or could not, perform: for he received 'but eighty pounds per annum or ninety at most, and House-rent for a few Rooms in the top of another man's house' all the time he was at Kidderminster.

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[1] See Appendix 5.

[2] i.e. the 'divers' Parishioners whom the Committee had made responsible for disbursing the profits of the living.

All this was discussed at a meeting of 'the Magistrates and Burgesses' in the Town Hall. Baxter describes the agreement which was reached as a 'Covenant' drawn up in 'Articles' and subscribed by both sides – he, for his part, disclaiming the 'Vicarage and Pastoral charge of the Parish and only' undertaking 'the Lecture'. So far the position is clear. Baxter had come back to his 'old Lecturer's place'; and was well-content. But not so the Trustees. Two considerations disturbed them – the fear that, so long as Baxter was Lecturer only, the County Committee might consider the living Vacant and make a grant of it to some one else; and the fear that, in such case, they might lose both Baxter and the money 'disbursed' on his account. Hence they went privately to the Committee and got an order 'appointing Richard Baxter to the Vicaridge of Kidderminster instead of George Dance, removed for scandal and insufficiency'.

This is dated October 9, 1647.[1] Then they wrote up to London and got the following Certificate (dated March 30, 1648) from the Westminster Assembly: 'According to an Order dated ye 9th October 1647 from ye Committee of ye City and County of Worcester, concerning Mr Richard Baxter, to gaine the approbation of ye Assembly of divines for his fittness to officiate the cure of the Vicaridg of Kederminster in the County aforesaid: these are to certifie the said Comittee for the county and citty aforesaid, that, having received a Laudable testimony of the Life Learning and Pastorall abillityes of the said Mr Baxter, he is approved by the Assembly to officiate the Cure of the Church of Kederminster in the County above mentioned.

'Adoniram Byfield, Scribe'.[2]

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[1] Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, f. 403. The Order is signed by Thomas Rous, B. Lechmere, Thos. Cookes, Jo. Giles, Tho. Yonge, W. More, Wm. Collins, Edm. Younge.

[2] *Ibid.*, f. 402ᵃ. The fact that Baxter is not among the Puritan nominations collected by Shaw (*Church of England* 1640–60, vol. ii, Appendix xi) is suggestive of something rather clandestine.

Thus Baxter became Vicar without knowing it. The Trustees and the County Committee and the Westminster Assembly knew it, and others got wind of it in the course of time; but, for more than three years, Baxter went on under the impression that he was nothing more than Lecturer. It seems almost incredible, but this is what he says – 'They never shewed me the order but kept it by them secretly'. At length, however, on the Eve of the Battle of Worcester (September 3, 1651), when their 'Houses were full of Soldiers',[1] the Trustees brought him the Order[2] and entreated him 'if not to own it, yet to keep it safe'. This seems to mean that they were apprehensive of unpleasant consequences if some plundering hand came across it, and the King won, and the facts of the case were brought to light. For then they might expect to be charged with illegal confiscation. Baxter, therefore, consented to 'keep it safe'; but he did not regard it as making any difference to his position. In his own eyes he was, and remained to the last, simply Minister, or Preacher of the Gospel, at Kidderminster; and his treatment of Mr Dance was admirable. Years later he could write – 'All this while that I abode at Kidderminster (though the Rulers that then were made an Order that no sequestred Minister should have his fifth part unless he removed out of the Parish where he had been Minister yet) did I never remove the old sequestred Vicar so much as out of his Vicarage House, no, nor once came within the Doors of it; so far was I from seizing on it as my own or removing him out of the Town. But he lived in peace and quietness with us, and reformed his Life, and lived without any scandal or offensivenes, and I never heard that he spake an ill word of me'.[3]

Moreover, with his consent, and very likely at his instance, the old vicar received his 'fifths' i.e. £40 a year, to the end of Baxter's time.

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[1] Royalist soldiers seem to be meant.

[2] There is no reference to the Certificate.

[3] *R.B.*, I. 97. This is Baxter's answer to the calumny that he enjoyed the living and so took 'another Man's bread out of his mouth'. The great exploiter of the calumny was Dr Thomas Pierce (see *ibid.* II, p. 280, and *The New Discoverer discovered*, pp. 134-5, by Pierce (1659)).

We learn from his answer to Stillingfleet [1] something still more to his credit. Mr Dance's performances in the Pulpit were so wretched (says Baxter) that 'when he preached, his own wife, though of the Church of England, would, for Shame, go out of the Church; yet did I never forbid him to preach, and he oft read the Common Prayer at Sir Ralph Clare's, and, I suppose, gave them the sacrament'. This, we must remember, was after 1647. There was another man at Mitton, a Mr Turner, the old curate and a worse character than Mr Dance, to whom Baxter was even more lenient. 'Because some of the Church of England would have him, and he would, against my will, read the Common Prayer to them once a day, I hindred them not from their choice, but they went on'. Yet, he adds, 'I had *then* opportunity to have hindred all this, if I would have used Magistrates. They were both by proclamation to remove two miles off; but neither of them once removed so much as out of their houses, nor did I desire it . . .' One may wonder if there were many other instances of such forbearance!

Let us now turn to the letter which, I think, explains why the forty soldiers voted for Baxter in 1647. It was addressed to John Corbyn – one of those who had joined in the invitation to Baxter of 1641 as well as of 1647; and who turned out to be a troublesome person. Self-conceit, coupled with gross ignorance, was his malady. This induced him to fancy slights where none was meant; and, at last, to accuse Baxter of failing to show him that degree of 'respect and gratitude' which was due to the man who had been the chief instrument, on both occasions, of procuring for him his appointment to Kidderminster!

Baxter's withering answer (of date August 18, 1658) lifts the veil. It relates how in 1647 he had offers of 'vacant places in four counties', how one place was reputed to be worth £500 per annum and 'many' to be worth £300. Yet, he chose Kidderminster. Why? He goes on: 'I purposely kept myself unplaced all the wars for love of my people that I might be free to return to you. And did my love to them draw me to take £90 per annum (for that is my share) when I was offered £500; and am I beholden to you as my Patron? It beseems me not to say the open truth, that, sure, my people were beholden to me! Have *you* ever lost £300 per annum for the Church, or love of your friends; and were' (then) 'hit in the tooth with it, when you had done, as if you were beholden to *them*? Do you think I cannot, in worldly respects, be quickly better provided for than here, if I would leave my friends that are so dear to me? And for whose sake do I thus deny myself? Truly, much more for the sake of many a humble godly man in Kederminster that hath scarce bread in his mouth than for yours. And had I no humbler neighbours, in whom I could take spiritual comfort, than you are, the Lord knows I would pack off and be gone – if I had here many £100 more than I have. I never came hither nor returned hither any more for your sake than for the sake of many a ragged Christian in town. Do you think I know not my own mind better than you? And what did move me'? Hereupon comes the passage about the soldiers. 'I had many score of my neighbours with me in the Wars – some going with me into Garrisons, and some went with me in a Troop into the field, and many and many a time ventured their lives, some taken prisoners, some dead, some slain, some wounded, many safe and returned home; and it was *they* that stuck to me and I to them, resolving then in the Wars that if our God restored us I would not forsake them, if now they forsook not Him and me. And do you think that these my faithful people, that purposely went with me (through so many years wars and dangers and sufferings) to engage not to leave them[1] had not a greater hand to my return than you, that say you first motioned my return at the Leaguer at Worcester? *First*, Sir? You know not, it seems, the fidelity and converse of your poor neighbours and me. Did you think that of (I think) some hundreds that went with me, and after me, to the Wars there had been no man motioned my return? *Those* were my Patrons, if my faithful people be my Patrons. I speak it not in passion and contempt of you, but that your Judgment of a Minister, though unworthy, may help you to self-suspicion and humiliation. Truly . . . though you are a Gentleman, and they are here mostly, poor, yet if all

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[1] A second true Defence of the Nonconformists against . . . Dr Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Pauls . . . (1681), p. 72.

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[1] Baxter's word can always be trusted; and here he says that many Kidderminster men went to, and through, the wars on purpose to secure his return. It is an amazing tribute of loyal affection.

Kiderminster Town and Parish were as good as you, and none better (though its like you would think it the best Parish on earth) I think I should leave them within a few weeks or months – you have such ignorant contemptuous thoughts of the Ministry that you think when they spend themselves for mens souls as judging not life nor labour or estate too dear, they yet owe *you* a reward for your patience and consent'! (*Baxter* MSS., vol. iv., ff. 124–5^b).

After this refreshing glimpse of Baxter, in a state of righteous indignation, we may resume the story.

When he came back to his old rooms he appears to have had nothing ready in the way of furniture. This may be inferred from what he afterwards replied to his neighbour Mr Tombes who twitted him on having escaped the plundering which had befallen some other Puritan ministers – himself, for example. 'Where you say I was unplundered I say *cantabit vacuus*; I had nothing to lose but Books and a Horse, which were lost – but' (i.e. except) 'that part of my Books was preserved'.[1] If, then, the rooms were not already furnished, he had to do some furnishing for himself or hand over the task to some one trustworthy, perhaps Jane Matthews, his housekeeper, whom he now engaged. One may imagine that his difficulty and discomfort in the matter, or his carelessness, may have hastened the coming (sometime before 1651) of his father and stepmother to live with him.

But, assuming him to have taken possession comfortably or otherwise, there are one or two things which it is well to remember. Thus, it is well to remember that in June 1647, though old in experience, Baxter was not yet thirty-two years of age. It should be realized, also, that his great work at Kidderminster was done before the close of his forty-fifth year. His ministry (unknown to himself or his people at the time) reached its end in April 1660 when he went up to London on the eve of the Restoration. Adding the fifteen months of his first period, the whole of his crowded life at Kidderminster was less than fifteen years.

Further, let it be borne in mind that from first to last, he was more or less a sufferer. All who know anything of Baxter are aware how he grew to regard Pain as an 'unvaluable mercy', 'For, it greatly weakened Temptations; it kept me in a great contempt of the world; it taught me highly to esteem of Time . . . ; it made me study and preach *things necessary* and a little stirred up my sluggish heart, to speak to Sinners with some compassion, as a dying Man to dying Men'.

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[1] *Plain Scripture Truth of Infant Baptism*, p. 378, 4th edition (1652).

Hence, he could exclaim (looking back) 'I humbly bless his gracious Providence, who gave me his Treasure in an Earthern Vessel, and trained me up in the School of Affliction, and taught me the *Cross of Christ* so soon; that I might be rather *Theologus Crucis*, as *Luther* speakethe than *Theologus Gloriæ;* and a *Cross-bearer* than a *Cross-maker* or *Imposer*'.[1]

This is true and fine; but nevertheless, he felt his physical suffering as a great drawback to his usefulness, and it seems fitting here to say something, once for all, about its history, its character and its final relief. His bad breakdown in the end of 1646 was the climax of many breakdowns. Their origin was mainly stomachic and could be traced, he thought, to excessive indulgence in raw fruit. As a boy he 'did eat Apples and Pears and Plums in great quantities' for many years. Other indiscretions intensified the trouble. 'When this had continued about two years', (he says) 'my Body being very thin, and consumption then very common in the country, I was much afraid of a consumption; and first I did eat great store of raw Garlick, which took off some of my Cough, but put an Acrimony into my Blood, which naturally was acrimonious'. Physicians good[2] and bad – more than thirty-six of them one after another – made matters worse. For he was induced to torture himself with 'Drugs without end' and every species of quack medicine. The account of his experiences in this respect is amazing; and its result was what one might expect. 'The Symptoms and Effects of my General Indisposition were very terrible, such as a flatulent Stomach that turn'd all things into Wind; a Rheumatic head to a very great degree; and great sharpness in my Blood, which occasioned me no small Trouble by the excoriation of my Finger ends, which upon any heat I us'd or Aromatick thing I took, would be raw and bloody; and every Spring and Fall,[1] or by any kind of heating, my nose still fell a bleeding, and that with such a great violence, and in such excessive quantities, as often threatened my Life, which I then ascribed to such Causes as I have since liv'd to see myself mistaken in; for I am now fully satisfied that all proceeded from Latent Stones in my Reins,[2] occasioned by unsuitable Diet in my Youth'.

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[1] *R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 21. The context might suggest a reference only to the first period of his ministry; but it is his way to foreshorten the perspective in summary statements, and it is plainly so here.

[2] Among the good he mentions Sir Theodore Mayerne (his favourite), physician (1573–1655) to King Charles the First and Dr George Bates, 'Archiater to King Charles the Second'.

It is wonderful how, in such a case, he managed to keep going. Yet he did. He was 'never overwhelm'd with real Melancholy. My Distemper never went so far as to possess me with any inordinate Fancies, or damp me with sinking sadness . . . nor did my Pains, though daily and almost continual, very much disable me from my Duty, but I could Study and preach and Walk almost as well as if I had been free'.

His permanent relief came when (about 1653) he began to learn from common sense. He discovered, for example, the superior virtue of simple remedies. 'At last I had a Conceit of my own that two Plants which I had never made trial of would prove accommodate to my Infirmity (viz.) Heath and Sage, as being very drying and astringent without any Acrimony. I boiled much of them in my Beer instead of Hops, and drank no other. When I had used it a month my Eyes were cured[3] and all my tormenting Tooth-Aches and such other Maladies. Being desirous to know which of the two Herbs it was which I was most beholden to, I tryed the Heath alone one time and the Sage alone another while; and I found it was the Sage much more than the Heath which did the Cure: whereupon I have used it now this ten years' – i.e. since 1654 – 'and through God's great Mercy, I never had a spot more for many years, nor many since at all. Also these other Effects have followed it – (1) It easeth my Headach. (2) I have no other Remedy for my terrible Toothach, inward or outward, that will serve; nor did this ever fail me, if it hath had but twelve or twenty hours to work. (3) Whereas before I could endure no strong Drink, but was fain to drink very small Beer or *Julep Alexande*, and a spoonful of Wine would have disturbed me a Fortnight (with Ophthalmies, Toothaches, etc.), since I used Sage I can bear the strongest Beer (so I disuse not my Medicine the while). (4) The vitriolate cutting Acidity of my Stomach is more dulcified than I could possibly have believed it would be. In a word, God hath made this Herb do more for me (not for *Cure* but for *Ease*) than all the Medicines that ever I used from all Physicians in my life; so that though still I am very seldom without pain, yet my Languishing and Pains have been much less these last ten years than long before'. This was written about 1664[1]; and at the same time, he wrote that his 'chiefest remedies' (besides the one indispensable herb just described) were these: –

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[1] This use of 'Fall' for Autumn and 'Reins' for Kidneys is noticeable. The latter is a Biblical word; and the former by no means a modern Americanism.

[2] *R.B.*, I, p. 10.

[3] For, 'near every day in one year and every second day for another year' he had 'a fresh *Macula* commonly called a *Pearl* in one Eye, besides very many in the other' (*ibid.* I, p. 82). This was after 1650.

'Temperance as to quantity and quality of Food: for every bit or spoonful too much, and all that is not exceeding easy of digestion, and all that is flatulent, do turn all to Wind and disorder my Head'.

'Exercise till I sweat: for if I walk not hard, with almost all my strength, an hour before Dinner and an hour before supper, till I sweat well, I am not able to digest two meals; and I cannot expect to live when I am disabled for exercise, being presently [2] overwhelmed with chilliness, flatulency and serosity.

'A constant Extrinsick Heat, by a great Fire, which may keep me still near to a Sweat, if not in it (for I am seldom well at ease but in a sweat).[3]

'Beer as hot as my Throat will endure, drunk all at once, to make me Sweat'.

To this picture of Baxter's tall, thin and lean form walking swiftly two hours daily out of doors, or seated indoors by a great Fire, and never quite at ease except in a Sweat, may be added the following: – 'My Writings were my chiefest daily Labour, which yet went the more slowly in that I never one hour had an *Amanuensis* to dictate to, and specially because my weakness took up so much of my time. For all the Pains that my Infirmities ever brought upon me, were never half so grievous an Affliction to me as the unavoidable loss of my time which they occasioned. I could not bear (through the weakness of my Stomach) to rise before seven a Clock in the Morning, and afterwards not till much later; and some Infirmities I laboured under, made it above an hour before I could be drest. An hour I must of necessity have to walk before Dinner, and another before supper; and after Supper I can seldom Study: all which, besides times of Family Duties and Prayer and Eating etc leaveth me but little time to study, which hath been the greatest Personal Affliction of all my Life.' [1]

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[1] So his rational self-treatment began about 1654. Six or seven years later he seems to have added the marginal note (put into the text by his editor Sylvester): 'After sixteen or seventeen Years benefit', i.e. 1671, 'it now faileth me and I forsake it'.

[2] i.e. immediately.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 11.

If his three meals a day were at eight and twelve and six o'clock (as seems likely) then it would appear that his working time was about two hours before dinner, and three or four before supper. Most of this was spent in writing: 'Preaching and preparing for it'—he says – came in by the way as his 'Recreations'. When, then, did he do his reading? When did he accumulate those vast stores of erudition to which his books bear such abundant witness? He quotes from hundreds of books ancient and modern, classical, patristic, mediæval and protestant. Even in the *Saints Rest* the margins of the second edition (1651) are crowded with references to many more than a hundred authors. He must, therefore, somehow have found time for reading every day. Every spare minute must have been so used. He must, too, have been a very rapid and retentive reader. But when? Not counting the minutes he might snatch at his meals, we seem shut up to the time after supper. He appears to have required but little sleep and to have had an easy command of the amount he desired. Hence it may have been his habit to read into the small hours. And this, I imagine, is what he did. Perhaps it was on some such occasion – in the still night – that his books came near to crushing him. 'As I sat in my Study' – he says – 'the Weight of my greatest Folio Books brake down three or four of the highest Shelves, when I sat close under them, and they fell down on every side of me and not one of them hit me save one upon the Arm: whereas the Place, the Weight and greatness of the Books was such, and my Head just under them, that it was a wonder they had not beaten out my Brains,[1] one of the Shelves right over my Head having the six volumes of Dr *Walton's*[2] *Oriental Bible* and all *Austin's* Works and the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, and *Marlorat*,[3] etc.'

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[1] *Ibid.* p. 84.

The house which he occupied still stands – with the few rooms (of which one was his study) much as he knew them. They are of such a height[4] that the three or four highest shelves would be well within the reach of a tall man (like Baxter) – which may explain and excuse his loading them with the 'greatest Folios'. All the walls, as far as possible, were lined with shelves well laden. Books, moreover, covered table chairs and floor. We may take so much for certain. Books were the one luxury which he counted a necessity. He thought no money wasted in the purchase of them; and he had a friend in London through whom he could get the oldest or newest at pleasure. No place more dear to him than his Study! It was his workshop, his oratory and (largely) his living-room. He always left it with reluctance (as at a later time his wife complained). Meals, like sleep, were a secondary matter; and it was fortunate for him in his bachelor days that he had the 'benefit of a godly, understanding, faithful servant (an ancient Woman near sixty years old) who' – says he – 'eased me of all Care, and laid out all my Money for Housekeeping, so that I never had one Hour's trouble about it, nor ever took one Day's Account of her for Fourteen Years together, as being certain of her Fidelity, Prudence, and Skill'.[5]

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[1] He cites the incident as one of his special Providences.

[2] Bryan Walton (1600–61) whose Polglot, six folios, appeared in 1654–7. The first work published by subscription.

[3] Augustin Marlorat du Pasquier (1506–62).

[4] The walls of what was probably the study are about 5 feet 6 inches.

[5] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 82 and 95. Her name was Jane Matthews and she died in 1681 at the age of 76. Thus she was ten years older than Baxter and would be 'near 60' when he wrote the first part of his Life in 1664. Her fourteen years of service must count from 1646 and she remained (it appears) in Kidderminster after his departure in 1660 – 'very eminent' there, and in 'the parts about for Wisdom, Piety and a holy, Sober, Righteous and Exemplary Life' (*Ibid.*, Pt. III, p. 190).

He thus refers to her in connection with the statement that during his ministry, he made it a rule rather to lose his Tithes than seem eager to exact them or go to law about them. Her strict economy was partly what enabled him to bear the loss; and he adds the interesting detail that what also enabled him to do so, was the financial 'help' of his 'Father and Mother-in-law' who both lived with him.[1]

In order to a right conception of his Ministry it is necessary to get at the sequence of events; and this is not always easy. For Baxter has a way of fore-shortening his story and so confusing the perspective. An example of this occurs at the very outset. 'I preached' – he says – 'before the Wars twice each Lord's Day; but after the War but once, and once every *Thursday*, besides occasional Sermons. Every *Thursday* evening my Neighbours that were most desirous and had opportunity, met at my House, and there one of them repeated the sermon, and afterwards they proposed what Doubts any of them had about the Sermon, or any other Case of Conscience, and I resolved their Doubts; and, last of all, I caused sometimes one, and sometimes another of them to Pray (to exercise them); and sometimes I prayed with them myself: which (beside singing a Psalm) was all they did. And once a Week, also, some of the younger sort who were not fit to pray in so great an Assembly met among a few more privately, where they spent three Hours in Prayer together. Every *Saturday* Night they met at some of their Houses to repeat the Sermon of the last Lord's Day, and to pray and prepare themselves for the following Day. Once in a few Weeks we had a Day of Humiliation on one Occasion or other. Every Religious Woman that was safely delivered – instead of the old Feastings and Gossipings – if they were able, did keep a Day of Thanksgiving with some of their Neighbours with them, praising God, and singing Psalms, and soberly Feasting together. Two Days every Week my Assistant and I myself took 14 families between us for private Catechising and Conference (he going through the Parish, and the Town coming to me). I first heard them recite the Words of the Catechism, and then examined them about the *Sense*, and lastly urged them with all possible engaging Reason and Vehemency, to answerable Affection and Practice. If any of them were stalled through Ignorance or Bashfulness, I forebore to press them any farther to Answers, but made them Hearers, and either examined others, or turned all into Instruction and Exhortation.'[1]

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[1] Just when they joined his household he does not say; but from a letter of Rev Francis Garbet, Wroxeter (see *R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 5), to Baxter in which he commends his love to 'yr Father and his godly yokefellow yr Mother', their arrival was sometime before January 17, 1650–1, the date of the letter (Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. vi, f. 120^{ab}).

It is evident that there is need here to distinguish. All this did not take place at once. No doubt, the change to one Sermon on Sunday and a Lecture on Thursday was immediate. Perhaps, too, there was no delay in starting the Thursday evening conference and Prayer-meeting at his house, and the occasional Fast-days, and, possibly, the modified 'Churching of Women'. But it must surely have been some time before he encouraged the 'younger sort' to spend three hours 'every Saturday night' in a prayer-meeting by themselves – though his first successes were among the young; and he himself is careful to remark, in a later sentence, that the custom of 'private catechising and conference' was not initiated for 'many years'. As to this last, in particular, he had been constrained to it by experience. At first he was content to catechise only 'in the Church'; and to talk with individuals 'now and then'. He found however, that his preaching, to be rendered fruitful must be followed up by direct personal converse with every family and every member of the family. Accordingly he arranged that he should be at home 'all the afternoons of Monday and Tuesday', of each week, to a certain specific number of families from the town; while his assistant should spend all the mornings of the same two days in visiting an equal number of families in the outlying parish.

To the same later time – after 1652 – must be referred the meeting for Parish Discipline which was held 'every first Wednesday of the month'; and, also, the Ministers' meeting for Discipline and Disputation which was held 'every first Thursday of the Month'. Both these institutions were an immediate outcome of the 'agreement' between Ministers and people which followed the Association set up in 1653. But, on the other hand, the weekly meeting of local ministers at his house after the Thursday morning Lecture – a meeting for lunch and for an afternoon of social intercourse – may well have begun its happy course with Baxter's first Lecture. For it sprang out of his own brotherliness; and brought him, week by week, his 'truest Recreation'. How it lived in his memory – and doubtless in theirs – during the dark days to come – as something inexpressibly sweet, is shown by many a later pathetic reference.

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[1] *Ibid.* I, p. 83.

By way of a fitting close to this Chapter something may be said about Baxter's order of service at St Mary's in his second period. As we have seen, there were two 'Lord's day' services when he first came to Kidderminster; and the local Committee wished for a Thursday Lecture in addition. This he gave them with the help of his neighbour Mr Cross of Kinver. But when he began afresh in 1647 he dropped one of the Sunday services while keeping up the Thursday lecture; and, that the one he retained was held in the forenoon is certain, since the afternoon was devoted to catechizing. As to the hour of service I have found no precise statement; but, remembering the early habits of the time, we shall not be far wrong in putting it at nine o'clock. Nor, remembering the ordinary length of Baxter's sermons, shall we mistake in assuming that the service lasted not much less than three hours. In August 1645 the 'Directory for Public worship', compiled by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and sanctioned by Parliament, was issued for use in all the Churches instead of the Book of Common Prayer[1]; and there is no reason to think that Baxter felt any reluctance to be guided by it.[2] But it is a mistake to suppose that the Directory was set forth as a complete liturgy, or required strict obedience to all its prescriptions. What it did was to set forth an order of worship 'agreeable to the general sense of the Word of God'. Its aim was 'to unite all congregations' not in the same words or forms, but only in worship of the same 'sense and scope' – leaving a wide margin of liberty to the Minister, who 'by meditation, by taking heed to himself and the flock of God committed to him, and by wise observing the ways of Providence, may be careful' (it is hoped) 'to furnish his heart and tongue with further and other materials of prayer and exhortation, as shall be needful upon all occasions'.

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[1] On May 23, it was ordered to be printed and published. Copies of it were to be distributed to each parish and chapelry, and to the respective ministers of the same by the constables and other officers. It was to be openly read in the Churches the Sunday after receipt of the book. Ministers declining to use it were to pay 40*s*. for every neglect, etc. (Shaw's *Church of the Commonwealth*, vol. i, p. 356).

[2] On the contrary, when he ventures to suggest certain changes in the Baptismal 'order' he does so in a way implying cordial assent to all the Rest. 'Farre be it from me . . . to quarrel' with the Assembly 'whom I unfeignedly reverence and honour' (*Plain Scripture Proof* . . . pp. 120–2 (1st ed.)).

Baxter, therefore, in adopting the Directory might be expected to take full advantage of his freedom in the use of it; and I think he did. I think we may account for the swiftness and preparedness with which he afterwards wrote out a whole liturgy of his own in a fortnight,[1] by the fact that he was but writing out and supplementing what he had practised at Kidderminster. A comparison of his Liturgy with the Directory confirms this. They are, of course, by no means alike in detail; but the scheme, the purpose, the spirit are the same. Indeed, his liturgy – it seems to me – is just Baxter's 'revised version' of the Directory – revised so as to come nearer to his own and his people's needs. From this point of view, it is clear that he found the Directory too bald and dull. Its order was as follows:

(1) Prayer.
(2) Readings from the Old Testament and the new *together*.
(3) A Psalm.
(4) Prayer before sermon.
(5) Sermon.
(6) Prayer and Lord's Prayer (the latter recommended).
(7) Psalm (if with conveniency it may be done).
(8) Blessing.

Eight items in all. But Baxter's order – surely for the sake of greater variety and brightness – ran to sixteen items:

(1) Prayer.
(2) One of the three Creeds read by the Minister (the people standing up as is 'the Custom'),[2] the Ten commandments, and Scripture Sentences moving to Penitence and Faith.

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[1] At the Savoy conference, 1661. [2] *Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 121.

(3) Prayer of Confession, with Lord's Prayer.

(4) Sentences declarative of God's absolution and comfort, followed by sentences (very characteristic) exhorting 'what you ought to be and do'.

(5) A Psalm – say the 95th or 100th or 84th.

(6) Psalms in order for the day.[1]

(7) Old testament reading.

(8) Psalm or the Te Deum.

(9) New Testament Reading.

(10) Prayer for King and Magistrates.

(11) Psalm—say the 67th or 90th or some other, or the Benedictus, or the Magnificat.

(12) Prayer – to prepare for sermon.

(13) Sermon.

(14) Prayer.

(15) Hymn (at discretion).

(16) Blessing.

Here are five prayers to four; and also five Psalms to two: for the Hymn was virtually a cento of Psalms – aptly chosen and distributed in four parts. That the Psalms were sung we may be sure, if Baxter had his way. Sacred Music was his delight and the improvement of congregational music was an object of his serious concern. In his treatise on 'The right method for a settled Peace of Conscience' (p. 534) he turns aside to exhort his 'Brethren of the Ministry' to preach and teach more in the week so that sermons, or the sermon, on Sunday might be shorter and 'a greater part of' the service and the day bestowed 'in Psalms and solemn Praises to our Redeemer'. He is not satisfied with Sternhold (d. 1549) and Hopkins (d. 1570) – the translation of the English Psalms in common use; and 'could wish that the Ministers of England' 'would unanimously agree on a better' ('not neglecting the poetical sweetness under the pretence of exact translating'). 'The London Ministers might do well to lead the way'.[2] Nor does he see why the Hymns and Psalms of Christian worship should be confined to David's. These were 'fitted to the former state and infancy of the Church'; but why should not Hymns and Psalms no less fitted 'for the State of the Gospel – Church and Worship', be 'invented' by Christians? It was a bold question to the ears of traditionalists; but it may have had its effect in promoting the uprisal of modern Hymnody. Baxter himself did something to answer it. A single quotation from his 'Church Directory' (1672)[1] – which reads as if it had come from an earlier sermon – will perhaps clinch the impression already made that Baxter's order of service in St. Mary's aimed at cheerfulness: 'Stir up your hearts in an especial manner to the greatest Alacrity and Joy in speaking and singing the Praises of God. The Lord's Day is a day of Joy and thanksgiving: and the Praises of God are the highest and holiest employment upon earth; and if ever you should do anything with all your might, and with a joyful and triumphing frame of soul it is this. Be glad that you may join with the sacred assemblies in heart and voice, in so heavenly a work. And do not – as some humoursome peevish persons – fall to quarreling with David's Psalms as unsuitable to some of the Hearers, or to nauseate every failing in the metre, so as to turn so holy a duty into neglect and scorn – for alas! such there are near me where I dwell; nor let prejudice against melody in Church – music (if you dwell where it is used) possess you with a splenetic disgust of that which should be your most joyful work'.[2]

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[1] Prudence may have held him off from these.

[2] In his Liturgy he casts his vote for William Barton (1598–1670) whose version appeared first in 1644, reprinted and altered in 1645, 1646, 1651, 1654, etc. But he would be content with Francis Rous (1579–1659) (a Presbyterian turned Independent) whose version was approved by the Assembly (1646),

authorized for general use by Parliament and adopted in Scotland. In 1696 William III issued an order in Council for the use in all Churches of Tate and Brady's Version.

[1] Pt. III, chap. 9, Direction 15.

[2] In the same section he shows himself in favour of responses by the people; and of organs or instrumental music.

6

HIS SUCCESS: ITS CAUSES AND LIMITS

BAXTER's reminiscent narrative of his success – written about 1665 – has been often quoted. 'The Congregation was usually full. . . . Our private Meetings, also, were full. On the Lord's day there was no disorder to be seen in the Streets, but you might hear an hundred Families singing Psalms and repeating Sermons, as you passed through the Streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one Family in a Street that worshipped God and called on his Name and when I came away there were some Streets where there was not past one Family in the side of a Street that did not so; and that did not by professing serious Godliness give us hopes of their sincerity. . . . We had 600 that were Communicants, of whom there was not twelve that I have not good hopes of, as to their sincerity. . . . When I set upon Personal Conference with each Family, and Catechizing them, there were very few Families in all the Town that refused to come; and those few were Beggars at the Town-ends, who were so ignorant that they were ashamed it should be manifest. And few Families went from me without some Tears or seemingly serious promises for a Godly Life. . . . Some of the Poor men did competently understand the Body of Divinity, and were able to judge in difficult Controversies. Some of them were so able in Prayer that very few Ministers did match them in order and fulness and apt Expressions and holy Oratory, with fervency. Abundance of them were able to pray very *laudably* with their Families, or with others. The temper of their Minds, and the innocency of their Lives was much more laudable than their Parts. The Professors of serious Godliness were generally of very humble Minds and Carriage; of meek and quiet behaviour unto others; and of blamelessness and innocency in their conversations. . . . And the zeal and Knowledge of this poor People provoked many in other parts of the Land'.

'O what am I, a worthless Worm, not only wanting Academical Honours but much of that Furniture which is needful to so high a Work, that God should thus abundantly encourage me, when the Reverend Instructors of my Youth, did labour Fifty years together in one Place, and could scarcely say they had converted one or two of their Parishes! And the greater was this Mercy, because I was naturally of a discouraged Spirit; so that if I had preached one year and seen no Fruits of it, I should hardly have forborn running away like *Jonah*, but should have thought that God called me not to that Place. Yea, the Mercy was yet greater in that it was of farther public Benefit: for some Independents and Anabaptists that had before conceited[1] that Parish Churches were the great Obstruction of all true Church Order and Discipline, and that it was impossible to bring them to any good Consistency, did quite change their Minds when they saw what was done at *Kidderminster*, and began to think now, that it was much through the faultiness of the Parish Ministers, that Parishes are not in a better Case; and that it is a better Work thus to reform the Parishes than to gather Churches out of them, without great Necessity.'[2]

What, in Baxter's view, were the causes of his success? His description of them is very full but is manifestly *ex tempore*, in the sense that he wrote down what occurred to him at the moment, and was at no pains to set the causes in chronological or logical order; nor even, here and there, to distinguish between cause and effect. Hence, there is need for some readjustment as well as for copious omissions.

(1) He notes, though not in the first place, a fact apart from which nothing else could have availed, – viz. – 'the free' and open field for his work provided by the Cromwellian settlement of religion. This did not amount to all that Baxter desired and had tried to procure; but it marked a great change for the better as compared with the Laudian days; and he was correspondingly grateful.

'I know in these Times[3] you may meet with Men that constantly affirm that all Religion was then trodden down and Heresy and Schism were the only Piety; but I give warning to all Ages by the Experience of this incredible Age, that they take heed how they believe any, whoever they be, while they are speaking for the Interest of their Factions and Opinions, against those that were their real or supposed Adversaries. For my part, I bless God who gave me even under an Usurper whom I opposed, such Liberty and Advantage to preach his Gospel with Success, which I cannot have under a King to whom I have sworn and performed true Subjection and Obedience; yea, which no Age since the Gospel came into this Land did before possess, as far as I can learn from History. Sure I am, that when it became a matter of Reputation and Honour to be Godly, it abundantly furthered the Successes of the Ministry. Yea, and I shall add this much more for the sake of Posterity, that as much as I have said and written against Licentiousness in Religion, and for the Magistrates Power in it; and though I think that Land most happy whose Rulers use their Authority for Christ, as well as for the Civil Peace, yet in comparison of the rest of the World, I shall think that Land happy that hath but bare Liberty to be as good as they are willing to be; and if *Countenance* and *Maintenance* be but added to *Liberty*, and tollerated Errors and Sects be but forced to *keep the Peace*, and not to oppose the Substantials of Christianity, I shall not hereafter much fear such Toleration, nor despair that Truth will bear down Adversaries'.[1]

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[1] See *R.B.*, Appendix IV, p. 76.
[2] *Ibid.* I. pp. 84–6.
[3] After 1662.

(2) Among circumstances, local and personal, conducive to his success were such as these: He came to a prepared people, in the negative sense of not being Gospel-hardened. They had not been used to good Gospel preaching, or indeed to regular preaching at all; and so were free from self-conceit or self-righteousness – though ignorant. He came in the full 'vigour of his spirits' – with a faith in his message so deep rooted as to command the devotion of his whole being, and make his 'familiar moving voice' the medium of a living prophetic word. He came, too, in the wake of a war which had cut off not a few of those who had been the most active enemies of true religion; and left behind, in many, a state of mind which predisposed them to serious goodness. Baxter speaks of this as his 'greatest help'. From the first, also, he had the co-opera-

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[1] *R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 87; Ap. *Ibid*, I, pp. 72–3. Liberty or Toleration for all 'errors and sects' that keep the Peace, together with 'Countenance and Maintenance' for the established ministers – is a fair description of Cromwell's policy.

tion of faithful men who did their utmost to second his efforts; and from their position could do much. There was Colonel John Bridges, e.g. a J.P. and Patron of the living. There were, too, the Bailiffs, 'godley men' as a rule, and 'always such as would be thought so'. And he was most fortunate in the 'great honesty and diligence of his 'Assistants'. He had two in succession – Mr Richard Sarjeant and Mr Humphrey Waldern. The former was in temporary charge when Baxter arrived.[1] He had been taken 'in a Case of Necessity' because 'they could get no other'; and there were some who wanted Baxter to get rid of him so as to appoint in 'his stead a very grave, ancient Doctor of Divinity who had a most promising Presence and tolerable Delivery, and reverend Name, and withal was my Kinsman. 'But' (says Baxter) 'I found at last that he had no relish of serious Godliness, nor solid Learning or Knowledge in Divinity, but stole Sermons out of printed Books, and set them off with a grave Delivery. But *Mr Sarjeant* so increased in ability that he became a solid Preacher, and of so great Prudence in Practical Cases, that I know few therein go beyond him; but none at all do I know that excelleth him in Meekness, Humility, Self-denial, and Diligence. No Child ever seemed more humble; no Interest of his own, either of Estate or Reputation, did ever seem to stop him in his Duty; no Labour did he ever refuse which I could put him to. When I put him to travel over the Parish (which is near twenty miles about) from House to House to Catechise and Instruct each Family, he never grudged or seemed once unwilling. He preached at a Chappel above two miles off[2] one half the day, and the other in the town, and never murmured. I never heard of the Man or Woman in all that Town and Parish, that ever said – this Fault he did, this Word he spoke amiss against me, this Wrong he did me; nor ever one that once found fault with him (save once one man upon a short

[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 79.

[2] Mitton – for which Baxter had promised to get an augmentation. A grant of £37 10*s*., from 'the sale of Dean and Chapter Lands was made to him for the 9 months previous to December 25, 1649' (Shaw II, 549). Another grant of £20 'to the Minister of Mitton Chapell in Kederminster' was approved on July 10, 1655? (*id.* 513). Mr Sergeant by the latter date had become Incumbent of Stone.

mistake, for being out of the way when he should have baptized a Child). This admirable blamelessness of Life much furthered our work; and when he was removed two miles from us, I got *Mr Humphrey Waldern*[1] to succeed him, who was very much like him, and carried on his work'.

(3) As time went by, success could be measured not only by the *number* of the converted but even more by the effect of their 'holy Living'. This acted as a constant silent reinforcement of the minister's influence. It quickened a conscience of divine things in home and workshop. It also took on special forms, such as private meetings with a few neighbours for prayer and mutual exhortation. These, in their turn, promoted unity and concord. 'At Bewdley there was a Church of Anabaptists, at Worcester the Independents gathered theirs; but we were all of one Mind and Mouth and Way: not a Separatist, Anabaptist, Antinomian etc in the Town'.

In all this he was thinking of what one might call his extraneous advantages: and of these he emphasizes, further, the following:

(*a*) The conveniences offered by the Trade of Weaving for study and talk. As the Weavers 'stand in their Loom they can set a Book before them, or edifie one another; wheras Plowmen and many others, are so wearied or continually employed, either in the Labours or the Cares of their Callings, that it is a great Impediment to their Salvation. Freeholders and Tradesmen are the Strength of Religion and Civility in the Land; and Gentlemen and Beggars and Servile Tenants are the Strength of Iniquity (though among these sorts there are some also that are good and just, as among the other there are many bad)! And their constant Converse and Traffick with *London*[2] doth much promote Civility and Piety among Tradesmen'.

(*b*) The comparative poverty of his people. For 'it is the Poor that receive the glad Tidings of the Gospel, and that are usually *rich in faith*, and *heirs* of the heavenly riches which God hath promised to them that love him. . . . As Mr *George Herbert* saith in his *Church Militant*:

'Gold and the Gospel never did agree,
Religion always sides with Poverty.

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[1] He had died before 1671 (*R:B*. III, p. 150).

[2] This should be noted. There was a weekly coach running to and fro.

'Usually the Rich are Proud and Obstinate, and will not endure the due Conduct of the Ministry. Let them be never so ignorant they must not be crossed in their Conceits and Way; and if they be, they storm and raise Persecution upon it; or at least draw away a Faction after them . . . But if a poor man be bad, and hate both Piety and Reproof, yet his opposition is not so fierce or so significant; he maketh not so much ado, nor engageth so many with him, nor is it so much regarded by the rest'.

(*c*) And, strange to say, 'the *quality* of the sinners of the place. There were two Drunkards almost at the next Doors to me who (one by night and the other by day) did constantly every Week, if not twice or thrice a Week, roar and rave in the Streets like stark-madmen; and when they have been laid in the Stocks or Gaol, they have been as bad as soon as ever they came out. And these were so beastly and ridiculous that they made that Sin (of which we were most in danger) the more abhorred'. Another kind of sinners were the 'Apostates' – not 'meer Separatists, Anabaptists or others that erred plausibly and tollerably' but – a number of persons whose lapse occasioned no surprise because their instability had been suspected from the first. These 'fell to no less than Familism and Infidelity, making a Jest of the Scriptures and the Essentials of Christianity'. 'And as they fell from the Faith, so they fell to Drinking, Gaming, furious Passions, horribly abusing their Wives (and thereby saving *them* from their Errours) and to a vicious Life. So that they stood up as Pillars and Monuments of God's Justice to warn all others, to take heed of Self-conceitedness and Heresies, and of departing from Truth and Christian Unity. And so they were the principal means to keep all Sects and Errours from the Town'.

(4) But, of course, Baxter himself was the mainspring of his success; and his generous ascription of it to others, or to circumstances, detracts in no degree from his praise. He mentions 'the acceptation of his Person', but in no boasting way. He merely takes notice of the fact that 'it is most certain the Gratefulness of the Person doth ingratiate the Message, and greatly prepareth the People to receive the Truth'. He had found it so himself – although he would have thought shame

of making it his main end 'to win estimation and Love'. Popularity was never his aim; but he appreciated it, all the same. 'Had they taken me to be Ignorant, Erroneous, Scandalous, Worldly, Self-seeking, or such like, I could have expected small success among them'.

No doubt, eloquence of lip and life was the great charm for all sorts, but for the poor there was something else. In every time of need he proved himself a present help. Of the £90 or £80 a year which came to him from the town he gave away no small proportion, and most of what he received from his books – some years £60 or £80 – to the poor. He gave away indiscriminately as well as freely. 'In giving that little I had, I did not enquire whether they were good or bad, if they asked Relief: for the bad had Souls and Bodies that needed Charity most. And I found that Three pence or a Groat to every poor Body that askt me, was no great matter in a year, but a few pounds in that way of giving would go far'. At least it 'much reconciled them to the doctrine which' he taught; and perhaps otherwise did no great harm.[1] But his relief of the poor was definite enough in some directions: for example 'I took the aptest of their Children from the School and sent divers of them to the Universities; where for 8£ a year, or 10£ at most – by the help of my friends – there I maintained them. Mr *Vines* and Dr *Hill* did help me to Sizers places for them at *Cambridge*; and the Lady *Rous* allowed me 8£ a year awhile towards their Maintenance and Mr *Tho Fowley* and Col *Bridges* also assisted me'.

Another definite direction for his charitable kindness was opened by the fact that (in his self-treatment) he had acquired a certain amount of medical knowledge and skill which, in the frequent lack of a regular practitioner, he could turn to the benefit of the poor. 'God made use of my Practice of Physick among them, as a very great advantage to my Ministry: for they that cared not for their Souls did love their

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[1] For 'the encouragement of the Charitable', he says: 'what little Money I have now by me' (*cir.* 1665) 'I got it almost all (I scarce know how) in that time when I gave most'. In another place (*Plain Scripture Proof . . .*) he says, what might seem to lessen the merit of his charity, that he found £100 a year more than he could spend on himself. He gave out of his superfluity. But what an abstemious rule of life this suggests!

Lives and care for their Bodies; and by this they were made almost as observant as a Tenant is of his Landlord. Sometimes I could see before me in the Church a very considerable part of the congregation, whose Lives God had made me a means to save, or to recover their health; and doing it for nothing so obliged them that they would readily hear me.'

(5) Other favouring 'advantages' were these:

(*a*) His single life. 'For' – says he – 'I could the easilier take my People for my Children, and think all that I had too little for them, in that I had no Children of my own to tempt me to another way of using it. And being discharged from the most of Family Cares (keeping but one Servant) I had the greater vacancy and liberty for the Labours of my Calling'.

(*b*) His change of method in pastoral care after 1653. This involved two things. First, 'the Work of Personal Conference with every Family apart and catechising and Instructing them'; second, 'the exercise of Church Discipline'. As to the former Baxter found that what was spoken to people personally 'and put them sometime upon Answers, awakened their Attention and was easilier applyed than publick Preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them', while, as to the latter, he 'found plainly that without it he could not have kept the Religious sort from Separation and Division'.

(*c*) His habit of adapting his teaching to the congregation 'in a suitableness to the main end, and yet so as might suit their Dispositions and Diseases'.

'The thing which I daily opened to them, and with greatest importunity laboured to imprint upon their minds, was the great Fundamental Principles of Christianity contained in their Baptismal Covenant, even a right knowledge, and belief of, and subjection and love to, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and Love to all Men, and Concord with the Church and one another. I did so daily inculcate the Knowledge of God our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, and Love and Obedience to God, and Unity with the Church Catholick and Love to Men, and Hope of Life Eternal, that these were the matter of their daily Cogitations and Discourses, and indeed their Religion. And yet I did usually put in something in my Sermon which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before; and this I did, that they might be kept humble, and still perceive their ignorance, and be willing to keep in a learning state. (For when Preachers tell their People of no more than they know, and do not shew that they excel them in knowledge, and easily over-top them in Abilities, the People will be tempted to turn Preachers themselves, and think that they have learnt all that the Ministers can teach them, and are as wise as they; and they will be apt to condemn their Teachers, and wrangle with all their Doctrines, and set their Wits against them, and hear them as Censurers and not as Disciples, to their own undoing and to the disturbance of the Church; and they will easily draw Disciples after them. The bare Authority of the Clergy will not serve the turn, without over-topping Ministerial Abilities.) And I did this also to increase their Knowledge; and, alas, to make Religion pleasant to them by a daily addition to their former Light, and to draw them on with desire and Delight. But these things which they did not *know before*, were not unprofitable Controversies which tended not to Edification, nor Novelties in Doctrine contrary to the Universal Church; but either such Points as tended to illustrate the great Doctrines before-mentioned, or usually, about the right methodizing of them. The opening of the true and profitable method of the Creed (or Doctrine of Faith), the Lord's Prayer (or Matter of our Desires), and the Ten Commandments (or Law of Practice) which afford matter to add to the knowledge of most Professors of Religion, a long time. And when that is done they must be led on still further by degrees, as they are capable; but so as not to leave the weak behind; and so as shall still be truly subservient to the great Points of Faith, Hope, and Love, Holiness and Unity, which must be still inculcated, as the beginning and the end of all'.

(*d*) His refusal to serve Tables, or, as he puts it, his 'not medling with Tythes or Worldly Business'. In this way, he had his 'whole time (except what Sickness deprived me of) for my Duty, and my mind more free from Entanglement than else it would have been, and also I escaped the offending of the People, and contending by any Lawsuits with them. And I found also that Nature itself, being conscious of the Baseness of its Earthly disposition, doth think basely of those whom it discerneth to be earthly; and is forced to reverence those whose converse is supposed to be most with God and Heaven. Three or Four of my Neighbours managed all those kind of Businesses, of whom I never took account'.[1]

(*e*) His long pastorate. 'It much furthered my success that I stayed still in this one place, (near Two years before the War, and above Fourteen years after):[2] for he that removeth oft from Place to Place, may sow good seed in many Places; but is not like to see much Fruit in any, unless some other skilful Hand shall follow him to water it. It was a great Advantage to me to have almost all the Religious People of the Place, of my own instructing and informing; and that they were not formed into erroneous and factious Principles before; and that I stayed to see them grown up to some confirmedness and Maturity'.

(*f*) Lastly he mentions his public disputations – particularly against the Quakers and his neighbour at Bewdley, Mr Tombes. By means of these he claims to have confirmed his own people and kept them united.[3]

Such were the causes of his success. It was the bright side of the picture; but there was also a dark side which he does not conceal.

He says, quite frankly, for example that 'the far greater part' of his parishioners 'kept away' from the communion – some constrained by Husbands or Parents or Masters, and some 'dissuaded by men that differed from us', Episcopalians to wit, who agreed with Sir Ralph Clare in his preference for the book of Common Prayer and disrelish of 'Preciseness and extemporary – praying and making such ado for Heaven'.

He found a difference between the parish and the town. His influence in the latter was stronger than in the former. 'Many ignorant and ungodly Persons there were amongst us; but most of them were in the Parish and not in the town, and in those parts of the Parish which were furthest from the Town.

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[1] At first he would not sue defaulters for their Tithe; but was 'constrained' to change this policy – except in the case of such as *could* not pay. Then, when Tithes and Damages were obtained at Law, he gave both to the poor.

[2] To be exact, certainly no more than eighteen months before the War and less than thirteen years after. Baxter is often rather astray in his time-references.

[3] These are dealt with later.

And, whereas one part of the Parish was impropriate and payed Tithes to Laymen, and the other part maintained the Church (a Brook dividing them), it fell out that almost all that side of the Parish which paid Tythes to the Church were godly honest People, and did it willingly without Contention and most of the bad people of the Parish lived on the other side'.[1]

The Town's most besetting sin was drunkenness; so it was when he first came, and so it was when he preached an assize sermon at Shrewsbury[2] from the Text 2 Chronicles xix. 6; and urged the Magistrate's obligation to assist the Church in suppressing crime and promoting virtue, in accordance with the moral laws of Scripture. He instances the 'common sins of Drunkeness, swearing and prophanation of the Lord's day'. He dwells especially on the failure of Magistrates to put down drunkenness. 'Though the Laws against Alesellers' abuses are so severe, the execution one would think so easie, and though there hath lately been a sharper attempt against them than ordinary, yet do they stand up as it were in defience of all your endeavors'. Then he proceeds – 'I speak not all this uppon uncertain reports. I live myself in as honest a Town as any I know in England; and where the Magistrates are so honest as to own Reforming work; and yet y^e drunkards of above 12 or 20 if not 30 yeares standing are allmost weekly raging before my doores. If I goe into y^e street they are there raving; if I goe to Church, one layes violent hands on me in y^e churchyard; if I think to take my rest after my wearysome labor, I am kept waking by their clamorous raging in y^e streetes in y^e dead of y^e night when all should be at rest. For all y^e honesty of y^e Magistrates and people, thus it hath bin and thus it is. And if y^e officers convict offenders for drinking or otherwise abusing y^e Lords day some of them vexe them with Lawsuits, being directed by y^e worthy men of y^e profession how to picke some hole in y^e matter of their proceedings, so that by y^e time y^e officers have borne y^e cost and trouble of y^e suit, they may be a warning to all others to take heed how they presume to resist the Devill and strive against him. And if they sett the offenders in y^e stocks, according to Law, instead of a matter of shame it is become their glory; and their companions get about them and feast them openly, and feed them there with wine and ale, so that they are never so joviall as in the stocks and Justice made an open scorne'.

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[1] What we are to infer from this he leaves unsaid.

[2] It is one of the Baxter MSS. – undated but delivered during the Sheriffship of Colonel Thomas Hunt (*R.B.*, Pt. I, p. 124), i.e. in 1655.

Three years later 1658 – when he published *A Treatise of Conversion* it was still much the same. Above all the other faults of which he speaks there towers the 'odious swinish sin of tipling and drunkenness and such like sensuality that declareth too many of you to be yet strangers to Conversion. I have told you the danger of it. I have showed you the Word of God against it. . . . I have told you, and told you a hundred times, with what a face these sins will look upon you in the end. And yet all will not do. For ought I yet see, as I found you I must leave you, and, after all my Pains and Prayers, instead of rejoycing in the hopes of your salvation, I must part with you in sorrow and appear against you before the Lord, as a witness of your wilfulness and negligence and impenitency'.

In fact the town cannot have been an easy place for the natural man. After his long day at the loom in stifling air, he had no outlet except the ale-house. This was his club. But, as the opinion of his neighbours grew increasingly antagonistic to any pleasure not derived from religion, he must have felt as if he were in an iron-chamber which slowly narrowed to crush him. There was no escape unless he got converted. He had no means of escape to other towns or parishes. Even the 'Foreign' was closed against him, if he had to live by his work. And his case was worse if he happened to be a church-member: for then he was liable to suspension or excommunication, with the horror of social ostracism which this entailed. Baxter describes such a case. It was that of a young man, one of six or seven young men, all addicted to Tipling. He, however, not having disowned his membership of the Church had to be treated as a member. 'But we told him' – says Baxter – 'that he was a notorious Drunkard, that we must presently admonish him and expect his humble penitent confession, and promise of Amendment, or else we must declare him unfit for Church Communion'.

The poor fellow promised but quickly fell again; renewed his promise time after time, but could not keep it. 'I warned him publickly, and prayed for him several days in the Church, but he went on in his Drunkenness still. At last I declared him unfit for the Church's communion and required them to avoid him accordingly'. Yet, as Baxter admits, he 'was a weak-headed Fellow', perhaps scarcely responsible for his conduct. Was it surprising if 'after his ejection' he took to standing in the Market Place, when he was drunk, and, like a Quaker, crying out 'against the Town' – against Baxter especially? 'He would rage at my door; and rail and curse; and once he followed me as I went to Church and laid hands on me in the Churchyard, with a purpose to have killed me; but it fell out that he had hold only of my Cloak, which I unbuttoned and left with him; and before his Fury could do any more (it being the Fair-day) there were some Strangers by in the churcheyard, who dragged him to the Magistrates and the Stocks. And thus he continued raging against me about a year, and then died of a Fever in horror of conscience'.

So much for the effect of the new Discipline; and this was not a solitary case. Another – yet more distressing to Baxter – was that of John Pearsall, who had been a personal friend, and (like other Pearsalls) one of his warmest supporters.

On Saturday, March 19, 1656–7 he wrote to 'Cosin Lawrance Pearsall' and gave reasons for refusing Baxter's summons to appear next day in Church to make confession of certain offences. Cousin Pearsall passed the letter on to Baxter who wrote at once – 'this Saturday night at eleven o'clock with an aching head and heart and weeping eyes' – a reply of four closely written quarto pages. First of all, he sets out the New Testament authority for discipline, then the duty of submitting to it, and lastly the character and aggravation of Pearsall's offences – e.g. slander and inexcusable quarrelsomeness. He concludes by reminding him that he has never lorded it over him but always appealed to his reason; and by offering to reform the 'discipline' in anything which Pearsall can show to be wrong. But discipline there must be, and he means to go on with it – notwithstanding the fact that the offender is 'a brother dearly beloved' for whom he would do much to keep in 'unity with' the Church.

'Had I not so esteemed you all these lines had not been written by

'Your faithful Friend
'RICHARD BAXTER'.

Pearsall seems to have made the public confession required of him, but that he did not permanently amend appears from a second letter dated August 1, 1657, in which Baxter recounts his faults, – slander, falsehood, deceptive penitence, subscription to a deceitful confession – and then says:

'You will take it ill, its like; but I dare not, for that, forbear to tell you that you discover by this an unsanctified heart, and I am confident that if you should die in such a state to night you would be in hell tomorrow: for my part I would not be in your state for all the world. I protest to you in y^e^ sight of God, I speak not this to you in spleene and passion, but in such compassion that if you were my only Brother I should say the same, and would do by you as I do, and dare do, no otherwise – though you and a thousand should hate me for it. . . . Ah, John Pearsall, sin is not worthy all this friendship. It must up by the roots or you are a lost man. Have you so little sense of what hath bin so long preached to you from Proverbs v. 11, 12?[1] Must those be your own complaints? And is there no remedy against deep-rooted selfishness and unreasonable wilfullness? Think not that these lines are written to you without tears. To conclude, by God's assistance I resolve to morrow, if you refuse a free and downright Humiliation and Confession, to desire y^e^ congregation to pray for you, and y^e^ next day,[2] if you do it not, to warne them to reject and avoid you. These Phrases we use instead of y^e^ word excommunication because they are the Scripture Words, and because the highest sort of excommunication we meddle not with. The Lord give you repentance, and a new and soft heart.

'Your faithful and truly loving Pastor
'R. BAXTER.

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[1] 'And thou mourn at the last when thou shalt have spent thy flesh thy body; and say, why have I hated instruction and my heart consented not to reproof'.

[2] That is the following Sunday.

'P.S. I have sent you a booke which I intreat you to accept and read over; and, if we are forced to cast you out of our communion, yet, do not in passion deny me this favour. It may be you may consider it better in your reading than you did in the hearing'.[1]

A third case was that, of George Nichols, a letter to whom from Baxter,[2] with his reply has been preserved in the Archives of the Kidderminster Town Hall. Its date, January 26, 1658, puts it later than Pearsall's.

'GEORGE NICHOLS,

'Because you shall have no pretense to say that wee deale hardly with you, I shall not meddle with that which is commonly called Excommunication against you. But because you have disclaimed your membership in the Church, and denyed to expresse Repentence of it, even in private (which you should have done in publike) I shall this day acquaint the Church of your sin and separation (in which you have broken your covenant to God and us), and that you are no more a member of this Church or of my pastoral Charge. I shall do no more. but leave the rest to God who will do more. Only, I shall desire the Church to pray for your Repentance and forgiveness; and therefore, desire you this day to be there and joyne with us in those prayers. And then, except you openly lament your sin, you shall be troubled with my admonitions no more. From this time forward I have done with you; till either God convert you, or I and my warnings and labours be brought in as a witness against you to your confusion.

'Your compassionate friend,

'RICHARD BAXTER'.

Nichols' curt refusal must have been sent the same day:

'SIR,

'Except Pearsall, y^r^ constable, will com to church and there acknowledge y^t he have done mee wronge in saying I was drunck when I was not, I shall not appear there. So I right.

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[1] Baxter MSS. (letters) iv, ff. 138^a^, 139^a^, ff. 136^ab^ 137^a^.

It is pleasant, after all, to find John Pearsall's name among the 'affectionate' and 'engaged friends' who wrote to Baxter the letters of August 2, 1660 and January 28, 1661–2. (See Appendix 8, p. 309 *infra*.)

[2] A copy, certified by Robert Aspland, one of Dr William's Trustees, – and dated February 6, 1827 – is among the Baxter MSS. (Letters) iv., f. 135^ab^.

'Your servant,

'GEO. NICHOLES'.

Baxter admits that of the four or five who were 'cast out' not one was benefited. Nay, 'though their wit and the honesty of their neighbours and Relations made them live quietly, yet their Enmity was much increased, and they themselves so much the worse as convinced the strictest Religious sort that excommunication is not to be used but upon great Necessity'. Why then did he use it? He answers: 'For the sake of the Rest more than for them. . . . We know it to be an ordinance of Christ, and greatly conducing to the Honour of the church; which is not a common prophane Society, nor a Sty of Swine, but must be cleaner than the Societies of Infidels and Heathens. And I bless God that I ever made trial of Discipline: for my Expectations were not frustrate, though the ejected Sinners were hardened. The churches Good must be first regarded'.

But his insistence on it cost him dear. Its unpopularity is certain: for (says he) from 'very fear of Discipline all the Parish kept off except about 600, when there were in all above 1600 at Age to be communicants'. And surely the 'enmity' or 'Fury' it inspired must have wrought harm not merely in its subjects but also in others. Hate no less than love is a leaven whose action is pervasive. So the 'excommunicated' may have had not a few secret sympathizers. And was there not a harshness in the system which justified sympathy? Baxter might plead for it in the interest of the Church; but the Church is an abstraction compared with the individual. It is the individual soul that counts even in a church. And if a system of discipline is good for the church, but in every case of its strict enforcement (as Baxter admits) makes the individual morally worse, or even drives him mad, can it be called Christian or wise? Did Baxter ever suspect that his system was a theory deduced from Scripture but defied by human nature; and, therefore, bound to fail? At any rate, the consequences of its application cast a shadow across the success of his last years at Kidderminster.

Note. Baxter thus describes the Church procedure (involving discipline) after 1653: 'In the Town where I lived we had a Monthly Meeting of three Justices of the Peace (who lived with us) and three or four Ministers (for so many we were in the Parish, myself and Assistants) and three or four Deacons, and twenty of the ancient and godly Men of the congregation, who pretended to no Office, as Lay-elders, but only met as the Trustees of the whole Church to be present and secure their Liberties; and do that which any of the Church might do; and they were chosen once a year hereunto . . . because all the People could not have leisure to meet so oft, to debate things which required their Consent. At this meeting we admonished those that remained impenitent in any scandalous Sin, after more private Admonition before two or three; and we did with all possible tenderness persuade them to repentance, and labour to convince them of their sin and danger; and pray with them if they consented. And if they would not be prevailed with to repent, we required them to meet before all the Ministers at the other monthly Meeting, which was always the next Day after this parochial Meeting.

'There we renewed our Admonitions and Exhortations, and some Ministers of other Parishes laboured to set home, that the Offender might not think it was only the Opinion of the Pastor of the Place, and that he did it out of ill-Will or Partiality. If he yielded penitently to confess his sin and promise Amendment (more or less publickly according to the Nature of the Scandal) we then joined in Prayer for his true Repentance and Forgiveness, and exhorted him farther to his Duty for the Future; but if he still continued obstinately impenitent, by the consent of all, he was by the Pastor of the Place to be publickly admonished and prayed for by that Church, usually three several days together; and if still he remained Impenitent, the Church was required to avoid him, as a Person unfit for their Communion; as is more fully opened in the Articles of our Agreement'.[1]

[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 150.

7

RELATION TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS (1647–58)

BAXTER's narrative of public affairs and his attitude towards them from the date of his leaving the Army to the death of Cromwell is given in *R.B.* (Pt. I, pp. 51–100) and is important for a comprehensive judgment of him. It reveals the warping effect of an inveterate prejudice against Cromwell. What follows is that narrative condensed to the utmost.

(1) When the Parliament voted that part of the army should go to Ireland, its leaders incensed the soldiers by persuading them that this was to deprive them of their pay and to divide them. Whereupon, they made an Engagement[1] at Triploe Heath to stick together. Cromwell was confederate with them and privately headed them in their rebellion.

(2) The Impeachment of the eleven members was a part of his design or conspiracy to subdue Parliament to the Army.

(3) While the King was at Hampton Court in charge of the Army 'the mutable hypocrites' (Cromwell, etc.) pretended an extraordinary care of his honour, liberty, safety and conscience; gave liberty for his friends and chaplains to come to him; affected to save him from the incivility of Parliament and Presbyterianism; in a word so behaved themselves that even the King's own adherents began to extol the army. But, meanwhile the Agitators (with Cromwell secretly behind them) were working up the soldiers to cry for 'Justice' against the King, and to drive him into some desperate course. This was effected by the letter to Colonel Whalley intimating that the Agitators had a design suddenly to surprise and murder the King – who, on reading the letter (as he was meant to do) slipt away to the Isle of Wight and really into 'the Pinfold' which Cromwell had prepared for him.

(4) The second civil war, with its invasion of England by the Scots and its risings in Kent and elsewhere, was the effort of 'all that were loyal and sober-minded' to deliver the King from such traitorous treatment.

(5) Although not satisfied with the King's Concessions in the

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[1] June 10, 1647.

Isle of Wight (November, 1648) – for he would have had him hold by an Episcopacy reduced from the Prelatic to the Apostolic pattern – yet Baxter regarded Pride's Purge, – by which Parliament was made to reverse its vote that the King's concessions were a sufficient ground for a Personal Treaty with him – as the acme of Cromwell's Rebellion, Perfidiousness, Perjury and Impudence.

(6) The King's trial, condemnation and execution followed in due consequence; and evinced the subserviency of a Commons 'deluded by Cromwell'.

(7) For a time Cromwell took on him to be for a Commonwealth; and got the Rump to enact the Engagement ('I do promise to be true and faithful to the Commonwealth as it is now established without King or House of Lords'); but Baxter, who had formerly prevented Kidderminster and most of Worcestershire ('except Worcester City') from taking the Covenant now spoke and preached against the Engagement, and with equal success.

(8) He denounced the invasion of Scotland by Cromwell under the pretext of keeping the Scots and their perfidious Charles II from invading England; and wrote letters to some of his soldiers on the march thither, 'to tell them of their sin'. At the same time, he utterly refused to keep the days of Humiliation – 'to fast and pray for the Army's success in Scotland' – appointed by the Rump, nor would he keep their days of thankgiving for Dunbar and other victories. On the contrary, 'instead of praying and preaching for them, when any of the Committee or soldiers were my hearers I laboured (he says) to help them to understand, what a Crime it was to force men to pray for the Success of those that were violating their Covenant and Loyalty, and going in such a Course to kill their Brethren; and what it was to force Men to give God thanks for all their Bloodshed, and to make God's Ministers and Ordinances vile, and serviceable to such Crimes, by forcing Men to run to God on such Errands of Blood and Ruin; and what it is to be such Hypocrites as to persecute and cast out those that preach the Gospel, while they pretend the advancement of the Gospel, and the liberty of tender consciences; and what a means it was to debauch all Consciences, and leave neither tenderness nor honesty in the world, when the Guides of the

Flocks, and Preachers of the Gospel shall be voted to swallow down such heinous sins'.[1] His own people were well satisfied with his doctrine; but the soldiers said he was so like Love[2] that he would not be right till he was shorter by the head. Yet the Government (which meant Cromwell) never forbad or hindered him from speaking his mind.

(9) He considered the execution of the Rev Christopher Love, the alleged head of a London plot against the Commonwealth, a crime of the 'deepest Dye' – though the known facts make out a strong case for his guilt. 'This Blow' – he says – 'sunk deeper towards the Root of the New Commonwealth than will easily be believed; and made them' (Cromwell, etc.) 'grow odious to almost all the Religious Party in the land, except the Sectaries'. At the time of Love's execution 'or very near it on that day, there was the dreadfullest Thunder and Lightening and Tempest that was heard, or seen, of a long time before'.

(10) Nevertheless, Baxter, and those of his mind, were not yet for the King, mainly (in his own case) because the Prelatical Divines, instead of drawing nearer 'those they differed from for Peace, had gone further from them by Dr *Hammond's* new way than their Predecessors were before them', their object being 'not Concord and Neighbourhood but Domination'. So that 'the dissenting Clergy and People' 'saw reason enough to believe that their little Fingers would be heavier than their Predecessors Loyns'.

(11) He is vivid in what he says about the battle of Worcester. 'Most of the Scots army passed by Kidderminster (a Field's breadth off) and the rest through it'. One of its officers, Colonel Graves (whom he knew), sent one or two messengers to him as from the King, to come to him. But Baxter was too ill to stir; and had no will to obey. 'Being not much doubtful of the issue which followed' he 'thought, if he had been able, it would have been no service at all to the King'. After the Royalists had been broken, many of the fugitives passed through the Town, or by it. 'I was newly gone to Bed when the Noise

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[1] *R.B.*, I, pp. 66, 67.

[2] Rev Christopher Love (1618–51), Minister of St. Lawrence in the Jewry, was beheaded on Tower Hill, August 22, 1651. 'To the unspeakable emotion of men' (Carlyle).

of the flying Horse acquainted us of the Overthrow, and a piece of one of *Cromwell's* Troops that Guarded *Bewdley-Bridge* having tidings of it, came into our Streets, and stood in the open Market-place before my Door, to surprise those that past by. And so, when many hundreds of the flying Army came together, when the 30 Troopers cryed *stand* and fired at them, they either hasted away, or cryed quarter, not knowing in the Dark what number it was that charged them; and so, as many were taken there, as so few Men could lay hold on. And till Midnight the Bullets flying towards my Door and Windows,[1] and the sorrowful Fugitives hasting by for their Lives, did tell me the Calamitousness of War'.

(12) Though the 'Rump' was no proper Parliament Baxter thought its authority more legitimate than Cromwell's; and saw in his violent dismissal of it a further witness of his design to make himself supreme. 'To which End he first doth by them as he did by the Presbyterians, make them odious by hard Speeches of them throughout the Army – as if they intended to perpetuate themselves, and would not be accountable for the Money of the Commonwealth etc; and he treateth privately with many of them to appoint a time when they would dissolve themselves, that another free Parliament might be chosen. But they perceived the Danger, and were rather for the filling up of their Number by New elections, which he was utterly against'. But there was this to Cromwell's credit – though even in this he did but seek to strengthen himself against the sectaries – that he was for 'owning a publick Ministry and Maintenance'. Herein Baxter, of course, was unreservedly with him, and 'drew up a Petition for the Ministry and got many thousand Hands to it in *Worcestershire;* and Mr *Tho(mas) Foley* and *Coll(onel) John Bridges* presented it; and the House gave a kind and promising Answer to it' – much to the displeasure of the Sectaries.[2]

(13) In April following (20th) the 'Rump' had to go its way; and in July (4th) the Little (or Barebones) Parliament took its place. Baxter calls this a 'Conventicle' – a variation, perhaps

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[1] This implies that Baxter's bedroom was on the High Street side, or front of the house.

[2] It was 'delivered' on December 22, 1652, and 'signed by above 6,000'. Out of it arose his controversy with the Quakers.

intentional, of 'Convention'. 'The Little Sectarian Parliament' – is another scornful name he has for it; and he shudders to remember how by a mere accident its proposal, at once to put down all the parish Ministers of England was defeated by only two votes. After this, 'it was taken for granted that the Tythes and Universities would at the next opportunity be voted down; and now *Cromwell* must be their Saviour or they must perish'. 'He had purposely cast them into the Pit that they might be beholden to him to pull them out'. It was, therefore, by his manœuvring that the sober party, having got the house to vote themselves 'uncapable of serving the Commonwealth', went and delivered up 'their Power to *Cromwell* from whom they had received it'. 'But his Game was so grossly play'd, as made him the more loath'd by Men of Understanding and Sincerity'.

(There was an Act made by this Parliament which Baxter might have been expected to condemn, but did not, viz. an Act 'that Magistrates should marry People instead of Ministers'. All he says is that 'Ministers were not prohibited to do their part' i.e. to sanction the Marriage by a religious service. He appears to have shared the puritan opinion that essentially marriage was a civil contract. Besides, his knowledge of the 'scandalous marriages', so readily performed for money by such clergy as Mr Turner, of Mitton, may have inclined him to approve the Act – if he had any doubts. There was no delay at Kidderminster in respect of it. The Act passed on August 24, 1653, and was to come into full force on September 29. Accordingly on September 4, Edward Climar was elected Registrar of Births, Deaths and Burials by vote of the Townsmen and Parishioners; and afterwards sworn by Mr Lawrence Pearsall J.P. Mr Climar himself was married on December 3 by Mr Thomas Bellamy J.P. and High Bailiff – the first case, perhaps, under the new order. Many other cases are recorded between 1653 and 1659 – some of the couples coming from Hagley, Old Swinford, Dudley etc. In several cases the intention of marriage was published and the marriage itself performed in the Market Place. Baxters' first appearance at a marriage, subsequent to this Act, was on August 15, 1659, when he joined in marriage Thomas Woodward and Mary Richards.)[1]

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[1] Burton's *History of Kidderminster*, Appendix, p. 218.

(14) With the disappearance of the Convention, the Council disappeared as well; and supreme power devolved on Cromwell, as Captain-General of the Army; and on what Baxter calls his 'Juncto of Officers.' This 'Juncto' – he says – 'and I know not who, did draw up a Writing called *The Instrument of Government* which made *Oliver Cromwell*' Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. He was thus – according to Baxter – near the top of his design, which was the kingship. But he did not take the last step, because he dared not antagonise his makers – the Army. Nevertheless, he possessed more than the substance of constitutional kingly power and often put it to a tyrannous use – as the way he treated his Parliaments and his system of Major-Generals amply proved. He set up, however, one beneficent institution. For, when the Westminster Assembly of Divines was dissolved (April 1653) together with the 'Rump', he chose 'a Society of Ministers with some others to sit at *Westminster*,' 'under the name of *Triers* who were mostly Independants, but some sober Presbyterians with them, and had power to try all that came for Institution or Induction, and without their Approbation none were admitted. This Assembly of Triers examined themselves all that were able to come up to *London*; but if any were unable, or were of doubtful Qualification, between Worthy and Unworthy, they used to refer them to some Ministers in the County where they lived, and to approve them if *they* approved them'. This was about the only action of Cromwell's for which (as quoted elsewhere) Baxter had words of unqualified praise. Yet even this, in his eyes, bore the taint of hypocrisy. For after his elevation to the highest place, *Doing good* became 'the principal means that henceforward he trusted to for his own Establishment'. 'I perceived that it was his design to do good in the main, and to promote the Gospel and the Interest of Godliness more than any had done before him – *except in those particulars that his own Interest was against*'.

Matthew Sylvester, Baxter's Editor and an intimate friend of long standing, relates how Baxter once said to him, 'Sir, I think I know you, but I am not sure I do'. He could not be sure of knowing the close friend of many years; but he could be sure of knowing Cromwell!

[1] Italics mine.

8

VISIT TO LONDON 1654-5-AND AFTER

BAXTER seems to have thought nothing much of a journey to London. The distance from Kidderminster is not more than 125 miles and the road – by Worcester, Evesham, Moreton-in-Marsh, etc., must have been comparatively good: for we hear of a public coach which went to and fro – an exceptional thing in those days. We have noticed his first visit on the occasion of his adventure into Court Life (1633). Several later visits were made to consult leading physicians, especially Sir Thedore Mayern (1573–1655) about his health. But at the end of 1654 he went up by invitation of Lord Broghill (1621–79) and was his guest. To make the matter clear a reference to the political situation is necessary. On September 3, 1654, Cromwell's first Parliament – after his acceptance of the Protectorship – met at Westminster; and, though purged at the outset of some recalcitrant members, did not prove so compliant as he wished. It declined to confirm the Instrument of Government agreed upon by the Council and Cromwell in the previous December, without minute examination. Particularly, it fastened on the 'Articles' (36, 37, 38) 'concerning Religion'; and questioned the clause that all should have liberty, or free exercise of their religion, who professed faith in God by Jesus Christ. The clause was, and was meant to be, vague. Those responsible for it, were disposed to a wide tolerance. But the dominant temper of the House, and that – strange to say – of some Independents, was not tolerant. It demanded definiteness; and argued that if one spoke 'de re and not de nomine' faith in God by Jesus Christ 'could contain no less than the fundamentals of religion'. In order, therefore, to clear the issue, a committee of ten[1] was appointed to wait on Cromwell and get him to convene a small Assembly of the most eminent Divines, 'to draw up *in terminis* a list of fundamentals'. The Protector assented (certainly against his inclination) and each member of the Committee was to nominate his man. Lord

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[1] Baxter says about fourteen (*R.B.*, II, p. 197), but Major Grove, M.P. (see *infra*), says ten and he was on the spot. In the MS. of *R.B.* at this point it looks as if Mr. Jesse (Baptist) wss one of the nominees: for the words have been written and crossed out.

Broghill was one of the Committee, and nominated the Primate of Ireland, Archbishop Usher ('then living at the Earl of Peterborough's House in Martin's Lane')[1] who refused on the score of 'his Age and Unwillingness to wrangle with such Men as were to join with him'. Then the Earl – at Usher's suggestion – nominated Baxter and sent for him.[2] In a letter to Baxter from another friend, Mr Thomas Grove M.P. for Wiltshire, a letter dated Westminster November 4, 1654 – there is no reference to the prior nomination of the Archbishop, and it reads as if the choice of Baxter by the Committee had been immediate; but this, no doubt, was an intentional suppression made from a needless fear of wounding Baxter's vanity, and a nervous anxiety to secure his consent. Mr Grove felt that a 'crisis' was on hand and that a right decision might depend on Baxter.

'I shall earnestly desire' – he wrote – 'if you may doe it without indangering your health that you will come and help us, and that you will thinke nothing lesse than an impossibility to be reasonable excuse. Dear Sir, who knows whether the Lord hath not reserved you, and lengthened out your daies so miraculously, for such a time as this. . . . I am glad to hear that you have every week the opportunity of a coach. If you please to make use of it to be here anytime within this fortnight it will rejoice many good people, and none more than

'Your friend y^{t} doth truly love and honour you,

'THO. GROVE'.

Baxter apparently did not hesitate, but went up as soon, and fast, as possible.

From a letter written to Baxter eight months later it appears that he was the guest of Mr Grove as well as of Lord Broghill, but this must have been towards the end of his visit.[3] Certainly he made straight for Lord Broghill's; and his arrival was probably at the beginning of December. For he found his colleagues already at work; and by December 12 the conference was finished. Baxter's account of its proceedings – which were ruled by Dr Owen [1] who himself at this time was 'under the baleful influence' of Dr Cheynell (1608–65) – is a striking illustration of the theological foolishness that deems itself wisdom. His own proposal had the sort of divine simplicity which, in such an atmosphere, ensured its rejection. 'I would have had the brethern' – he says – 'to have offered the Parliament the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Decalogue alone as our essentials or Fundamentals, which at least contain all that is necessary to salvation; and hath been by all the ancient Churches taken as the sum of their Religion'. To this the Brethren said, 'Why, a Socinian or a Papist will subscribe all that'; and, when he replied 'so much the better for your purpose, if your purpose is concord', they were shocked. He had no sympathy with Papist or Socinian; but his point seems to have been that it was best to assume the good faith of every subscriber until his action afterwards might demonstrate his dishonesty: then you could deal with him. Baxter was always against an inquisitorial procedure, in the matter of faith. Finally, the Assembly voted the Fundamentals to be twenty – *nem. con.*[2] These were presented by the Committee to the House on December 12 and were ordered to be printed; but beyond a reading of the first article on December 15 there was no further reference to them. As Baxter puts it 'their Propositions were printed for the Parliament; but the Parliament was dissolved' (on January 22) 'and all came to nothing, and that Labour was lost'.[3]

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[1] 'Just over against Charing Cross'.

[2] *R.B.*, II, p. 197.

[3] John Grigge, Blackfriars, London, August 25, 1655. 'I had the happiness once when you were *last* in Town to enjoy your company at my house in Blackfriars when you were Major Grove's guest'. Baxter MSS. (see *R.B.*, II, p. 279, for another letter from Mr Grigge or Griggs).

Baxter's disappointment was shared by more than Major Grove and other London friends. A letter from Giles Collier, minister of Blockley, dated January 1, 1654–5, discloses how the brethren of the Worcestershire Association were following him with keen interest. They felt the honour done to Baxter as partly reflected on themselves. They met for prayer on his behalf – that he 'and the rest of the Ministers' might 'give faithful and seasonable advice and incline the hearts of the Protector and Parliament to receive it'. At (apparently) another

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[1] Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, and *the* 'great Man'.

[2] Probably the only one on his side, was the Rev Richard Vines who 'would not come among them till he heard Mr Baxter was come' (B. MSS. (Treatises) f. 92^{ab} – 93^{a}). But neither voted against.

[3] *R.B.*, II, p. 205.

(and the regular monthly) meeting at Evesham – which Mr Collier could not attend because 'travelling was so extremely perilous' – ''twas agreed that we should write to you'. For 'we long to hear what agreement there is amongst the Ministers . . . what hopes you have, what your fears and streights are' – so far as it is expedient, and 'you may be at leisure, to make them known'. He begs for a letter by the bearer, instead of a carrier – to save time and trouble. He begs, also that Baxter will contrive to lodge with him, or at least call upon him, on his homeward Journey.[1]

To one so evidently expectant of great things the news from London must have been depressing. Did it mean that their 'great man' was not so influential in high quarters as he and his brethren had imagined? But if the first news was of failure, the next made amends. For this would speak of his extraordinary pulpit-success. His fame as a preacher had preceded him; and, though he seems not to have preached in London before, the people were all eagerness to hear him. He says nothing about the matter himself – except in connection with three sermons which he afterwards enlarged and published.[2] He delivered these at Mr Vines' Church, Lawrence Jury, at St Paul's, and at St Martin's-in-the-Fields respectively. Of that at St. Paul's he says – it 'was preached at the desire of Sir Christopher Pack, then Lord Mayor, to the greatest Auditory that ever I saw'. Of that at Lawrence Jury he gives this account – 'though I sent the day before to secure room for the *Lord*

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[1] Baxter MSS., vol. iii, f. 174^a. In parts of the letter the writer reveals the features of a strict Puritan. He wants Government, e.g. to suppress the observance of Christmas day, and 'profane ignorant curates' who creep 'into our parishes and baptize, etc., with the Common Prayer Book'. But he conformed to the Uniformity Act of 1662! From the same letter it appears that Baxter had stayed at Moreton-in-Marsh – three miles off – on his way up.

[2] 'When I returned I was sollicited by Letters to print many of the Sermons which I had preached in London' (*R.B.*, I, p. 111), but he 'gratified their desires' only in the case of these three – 'Making light of Christ' . . . from Matthew xxii. 5 preached at Lawrence Jury . . . published (1658) in a Volume of 243 pages; 'A sermon of Judgment' . . . from 2 Corinthians v. 10, 11 . . . preached at St. Paul's on December 17 . . . published (1658) in a Volume of 174 pages and 'Catholick Unity' . . . from Ephesians iv. 3 . . . preached at St Martin's Church . . . December 24 . . . published (1660) in a volume of 379 pages.

Broghill, and the Earl of *Suffolk*, with whom I was to go in the Coach, yet when I came, the Crowd had so little respect of Persons, that they were fain to go home again . . . and Mr Vines himself was fain to get up into the Pulpit, and sit behind me and I to stand between his legs. . . .'

There was no less a crowd at Westminster Abbey where he preached on Christmas eve and where the Earl of Warwick – who with Lord Broghill, had made the engagement – had to stand throughout the service. The chief part of his audience consisted of Cromwell and 'many Honourable members of Parliament'. Never before, 'save once', had he preached before Cromwell, when he was an inferiour man among other Auditors'.[1] Now Cromwell had been Lord Protector for twelve months and was the most powerful man in England; while Baxter was still merely a Minister of the Gospel at Kidderminster. But external differences of rank carried no weight with Baxter against the duty of speaking what he thought to be the truth; and on this occasion, misguided by prejudice, he spoke in a strain of almost indecent 'plainness'.[2]

His text was 1 Corinthians i. 10, and his theme was the 'Divisions and Distractions of the Church' – 'showing (1) how mischievous a thing it was for Politicians to maintain such Divisions for their own ends, that they might fish in troubled waters, and keep the Church by its Divisions in a State of Weakness, lest it should be able to offend them', and then (2) 'the Necessity and Means of Union'.

Considering that Cromwell's efforts to promote Unity and tolerance were in the very act of being frustrated by the divines – as we have seen – Baxter's attitude was ludicrous. We often fight each other in the dark, he once said; and he was fighting Cromwell in the dark. His own passionate desires for Unity had their best friend (had he known it) in the man who sat there listening to an undeserved indictment. Cromwell might well have felt resentful.[3] But he did not manifest

[1] This would be in the early days of his Chaplaincy (1645–6).

[2] Not even Lord Broghill can have been pleased: for, though he joined Cromwell at first from motives of self-interest, experience of him (we are told) had induced 'strong admiration and esteem'.

[3] Baxter says he heard that his 'plainness and nearness' was displeasing.

his resentment. With a magnanimity which Baxter, in his ignorance, may have called subtlety, he sent for him twice, first in the presence of 'three of his chief men'; and – a few days later – in the presence of 'almost all his Privy Council', and tried to make him own 'God's Providence in the change of the Government and how God had owned it, and what great things had been done at home and abroad'; tried, also, to elicit his 'Judgment about Liberty of Conscience (which he pretended to be most zealous for)'. But alas! he found no understanding in Baxter, who could only see him through his own coloured spectacles. He had made up his mind about Cromwell; and was (unconsciously) impervious to further light. All he could say of his two speeches was that they were long, slow, and tedious. All he could see was 'that he learned most from himself; being more disposed to speak many hours than to hear one, and little heeding what another said when he had spoken himself'. Was not something to the like effect said of Baxter at the Savoy Conference? This is not the place to work out a study of the two men, but one remark may be made. When George Fox met Cromwell they were drawn together at once. It is a significant fact – significant of a temperamental sympathy with each other which cut them both off from Baxter. *He* was no mystic. The mystic's heights and depths of feeling, and flashes of insight, and often confused intellectual processes, were outside his ken. They were, therefore, outside his faith; and he was not the first, or the last, to set down the mystic as a charlatan: thereby confessing his own limitations.

There was another man not far from Lord Broghill's who was as little a mystic as himself – Archbishop Usher – who had long been an honoured guest at the Earl of Peterborough's house; and to whom Cromwell (notwithstanding the gulf of difference between them) accorded a public funeral in Westminster Abbey when he died on March 21, 1656–7.[1] Baxter's admiration of him dated at least from the time when he came across his *Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Form of Synodical Government received in the Ancient Church* (1641); and scores of subsequent references go to show that, in looking back to this

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[1] His death took place at another house of the Earl's in Reigate to which he removed on February 13, 1656–7.

London visit, he counted his personal intercourse with the Archbishop as its greatest privilege. 'Sometimes' – says Baxter – 'he came to me and oft I went to him'. They talked over their views touching Church-Unity, Episcopacy, Presbytery, Ordination, etc.; and Baxter was delighted to find the older man so much of the same mind as himself, and so ready to communicate the benefit of his larger knowledge. He had been carrying on a somewhat acrimonious debate with Dr Kendal[1] (1610–65) Minister of St Benedict's, Gracechurch, 'about Universal Redemption'; but when, at the Doctor's suggestion, the matter was referred to Usher 'for our Reconciliation and Future Silence', Baxter willingly agreed. They met in his study; and promised 'to write against each other no more',[2] so decisive with Baxter was his personal influence. Their 'Converse', too, was of practical religion and how to further it; and it was due to the Archbishop's 'Persuasions' that Baxter was led to write his most popular book, *A Call to the Unconverted* (1657) – with its sequel *Directions and Persuasions to a sound Conversion* (1658).[3]

In one case, on the other hand, Usher's penetrating influence seems to have led him astray. This was the case of Dr Nicholas Gibbon (1605–97) a person[4] by no means contemptible either in character or ability – something of a crank, but a sincere man, a clear thinker along his own lines, a learned theologian, and a devotee of Unity among Christians. Perhaps, it was the last point which induced him to call on Baxter at Lord Broghill's. He may have expected him to be sympathetic when he drew forth his scheme of Theology which 'contained', he said, 'the only *Terms* and *Method* to resolve all Doubts whatever in Divinity and Unite all Christians through the World'. Baxter 'heard him above an hour in silence' and 'thanked him'. But 'Bishop Usher had, before, occasionally spoken of him in my hearing as a Socinian, which caused me to hear him with suspicion'. So, after two or three days, he had satisfied himself that the man was a sort of Socinian Papist; and, in that light, he still regarded him twenty years afterwards.[1] Even Baxter was not proof against a poisonous word from one for whom he felt profound reverence, like Usher.

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 110.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, p. 206 and Pt. I, p. 110. Mr Vines, a common friend, was a mediary.

[3] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 115–16.

[4] In the text of *R.B.*, I, p. 205, he is called 'a Certain Person' (Sylvester's alteration?) but in the MS. 'a very Reverend Juggler'.

Just when he returned home is not clear. But, if the writer[2] of a letter addressed to him at Kidderminster on January 31, 1654–5, knew of his being there, this would be proof of less than a two months' stay in London.

I find no trace of any further absences – except for a day or two at Worcester, or Shifnal, or Dudley – during the next five years. He seems to have spent them entirely with and for his people. They were the richest in self-devotion and results, of his whole ministry. He had become an enthusiast for catechizing; and, in the latter part of his sermon before Cromwell, had put it as a duty of the Government to see that Catechists were appointed in every Church; that they were properly paid; and that no persons of any age or rank should be excused from them – save for certain good reasons. Now, on his return home, he at once began to practise what he had preached. He determined also to engage his Brethren of the County to go with him; and as usual, they followed his lead. 'At their desire', he 'wrote a Catechism and the Articles of our Agreement; and, before them, an earnest Exhortation to our Ignorant People to submit to this way. . . . The Catechism was also a brief confession of Faith, being the Enlargement of a Confession which I had before printed in an open Sheet, when we set up Church Discipline'.

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[1] *R.B.*, II, pp. 205–6. See article in *D.N.B.* The following sentences from this Article are noteworthy, 'he was ejected from Sevenoaks in 1650 or earlier and had to work as a farm labourer in order to support himself and his eleven children. While thus engaged he was brought before the Committee in Kent, and asked how he spent his time. He answered that he studied during part of the night and performed manual labour by day, and showed his hardened hands, remarking to some who scoffed, 'Mallem callum in manu quam in conscientia'.

[2] John Dolphin of Church Hoinborne. Baxter MSS. (Letters) vol. iii, f. 171^{ab}.

[3] The reference is to the 'Profession' in *Christian Concord* (1653). The Catechism, Articles of Agreement, and Exhortation were published in 1656 – as *The Agreement of Divers Ministers of Christ in the County of Worcester and some adjacent parts for Catechizing or personal instructing all in their several Parishes that would consent thereto. . . .* Fifty-eight ministers signed the agreement, with Baxter at their head.

A direct result of this enterprise was his book entitled '*Gildas Salvianus: the Reformed Pastor.* showing the Nature of the Pastoral work, especially in Private Instruction and catechizing – with an open confession of our open sins. Prepared for a day of Humiliation kept at Worcester December 4, 1655, by the Ministers of that County who subscribed the Agreement for Catechizing, and Personal Instruction, at their entrance upon this work'.[1] A more particular account is as follows: 'When we set upon this great work it was thought best to begin with a Day of Fasting and Prayer by all the Ministers at *Worcester*, where they desired me to preach. But Weakness and other things hinderd me from that Day; but to compensate that, I enlarged and published the Sermon which I had prepared for them, and entitled the Treatise, *Gildas Salvianus* (because I imitated *Gildas* and *Salvianus* in my Liberty of Speech to the Pastors of the Churches),[2] or the *Reformed Pastor*. I have very great Cause to be thankful to God for the success of that Book, as hoping many thousand Souls are the better for it, in that it prevailed with many Ministers to set upon that Work which I there exhort them to. Even from beyond the Seas I have had letters of Request to direct them how they might bring on that Work according as that Book had convinced them that it was their Duty. If God would but reform the Ministry,[3] and set them on their Duties zealously and faithfully, the People would certainly be reformed. All Churches either rise or fall as the Ministry doth rise or fall (not in Riches and Worldly Grandure) but in Knowledge, Zeal and Ability for their Work'.

We must, then, picture Baxter and his assistants as systematic catechizers and instructors of the people – young and old – week by week, for the next five years. Not *all* the people, but those who were willing; and the unwilling (he says) were few.

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[1] It was finished December 25, 1655. But the Preface is dated April 15, 1656, and an Address 'to the Lay-Reader', a day later.

[2] Gildas 'the Wise' d. 570.

Salvianus – Presbyter of Marseilles – (400?–480). Both 'distinguished for their bold and faithful warnings'.

[3] Needless to say it is in the sense here described that Baxter uses the word Reformed. He is not thinking of the Reformed as distinguished from the Romish Ministry.

It was a big task – in fact too big for the Ministers of large parishes, let them be as earnest and hard-working as possible. Baxter discovered this very soon; and made it the ground of an appeal to 'the Governors of the Nation' to send and support more labourers in the harvest. The passage in which the appeal is made contains the following welcome light on his own case: 'We are together two Ministers[1] and a third at a Chapel,[2] willing to bestow every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work that we are now upon, our hands were full, and now we are engaged to set apart two days every week from morning to night for private catechizing and instruction; so that any man may see that we must leave undone all that other work that we were wont to do at that time; and we are necessitated to run upon the public work of preaching with small preparation, and so must deliver the message of God in such a raw and confused manner and unanswerably to its dignity and the needs of Men's souls, that it is a great trouble to our minds to consider it, and a greater trouble to us when we are doing it. And yet it must be so: there is no remedy. Unless we will omit this personal instruction, we must needs run unprepared into the pulpit; and to omit this we dare not, it is so great and necessary a work. When we have incurred all the fore-mentioned inconveniences, and have set two whole days every week apart for the work that we have now undertaken, it will be as much as we shall be able to do, to go over the parish but once a year, there being in it about 800 families; and what is worse than that, we shall be forced to cut it short, and do it less effectually than we ought, having above fifteen families to visit in a week. And alas! how small a matter is it to speak to a Man once only in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison of what their necessities require'.[3]

Yet whether Governors come to the rescue or not, the work must be done. He urges his brethren to it with characteristic vehemence – though confessing his own former negligence. He answers every conceivable objection and sweeps aside every suggested difficulty. It seems to him *the* work to which

[1] Mr Baldwin and himself at Kidderminster.

[2] Mr Sarjent at Mitton.

[3] *Reformed Pastor*, pp. 360–1 (Nisbet's edition 1860), chap. vi.

God has been leading them and for which his wondrous Providences have been preparing the field. He is sure, therefore, that the power to do it will be forthcoming. 'He that imposeth duty hath the fullness of the Spirit and can give men hearts to obey his laws'. So he exclaims:

'When I look before me, and consider what, through the blessing of God, this work, well managed, is likely to produce, it makes my heart to leap for Joy. Truly, brethren, you have begun a most blessed work, such as your consciences may rejoice in, your parishes rejoice in, the nation rejoice in; and children yet unborn, yea, thousands and millions, for aught we know, may have cause to bless God for it, when we have finished our course. And though it be our business here to humble ourselves for the neglect of it so long, as we have very great cause to do; yet the hopes of a blessed success are so great in me, that they are ready to turn it into a day of rejoicing. I bless the Lord that I have lived to see such a day as this, and to be present at so solemn an engagement of so many servants of Christ to such a work. I bless the Lord that hath honoured you of this county to be the beginners and awakeners of the nation hereunto'.[1]

He was plainly in a very exalted mood [2] – as of one who sees his 'vision splendid' about to be realized. Nothing, he thinks, can prevent it – nothing but their own lack of stedfastness; and that was indeed a reason for fear. 'We have engaged ourselves under our hands near three years ago that we will set up the exercise of discipline; and yet how many have neglected it to this day, without giving any just and reasonable excuse! We have now subscribed another agreement and engagement for catechizing and instructing all that will submit. We have done well so far; but if now we should flag and prove remiss and superficial in the performance, our subscriptions will condemn us. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; it is not your names only but your hearts and hands also, that he requireth. There is no dallying with God by feigned promises: He will expect that you be as good as your word. He will not hold him guiltless that, by false oaths or vows or covenants with Him, doth take his holy name in vain'.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

[2] His mood is reflected in his style which has an extraordinary verve, warmth and smoothness; and makes the *Reformed Pastor* (I think) the best written of all his books.

There is ample evidence that, at any rate, Baxter and his assistants did not so take God's name in vain. Week after week, with unresting diligence, the week's appointed work was done. Every soul in the Parish was approached with a view to its conversion, or edification. Copies of the Catechism were delivered to every family, rich and poor alike. They were delivered by one of the Ministers personally, who went from house to house, and took the opportunity of persuading all 'persons' 'at years of discretion' – the aged especially – to read, mark, and learn. This was the first step. Then it was understood that a month or six weeks later, the Minister would call again, and begin the questioning. Thus started, the work went on – the utmost care being taken to deal with every one, and most of all, 'the old people of weak memories' in a gentle, convincing and winning way. 'A Soul is so precious that we should not lose one for want of labour . . . charity beareth and waiteth long.'[2]

Baxter's testimony to the greater effectiveness of such individual dealing as compared with mere preaching is emphatic. 'For my part, I speak as plainly and affectingly as I can; next my study to speak truly, this is my first chief study; and yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers eight or ten years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and wonder when I tell them the story of his birth, life and death, and sending abroad the Gospel, as if they had never heard it before, and that know not of any original sin; and of those that know the history of the Gospel, how few are there that know the nature of repentance, faith and holiness that it requireth, or, at least, that know their own hearts. But most of them have an ungrounded affiance in Christ, trusting that He will pardon, justify and save them, while the world hath their hearts, and they live to the flesh; and this affiance they take for justifying faith. I have found by experience that an ignorant sot that hath been an unprofitable hearer so long, hath got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching. I know that the public preaching of the Gospel is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once; but otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner: for the plainest man that is, can scarcely speak plain enough in public for them to understand; but in private we may do much more'.

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[1] *Reformed Pastor*, p. 411.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 441.

It is significant of his intense preoccupation, during these last years, with what he held to be the Minister's chief concern, that he preached and wrote so much on conversion. In 1657 appeared *A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live and accept of Mercey while Mercey may be had, as ever they should find Mercey in the day of their extremity: From the living God.* About the same time (June 1657) he had ready for the press *A Treatise of Conversion. Preached and now published for the use of those that are strangers to a true conversion, especially the grossly ignorant and ungodly;* while another book – *Directions and Persuasions to a Sound Conversion: For prevention of that Deceit and Damnation of Souls, and of those Scandals, Heresies and desperate Apostasies, that are the consequents of a Counterfeit or Superficial change* – he finished by July 5, though the date of the Preface is May 29, 1658. Of the second of these Baxter says: 'I published a Treatise of Conversion being some plain Sermons on that subject which Mr *Baldwin* (an honest young Minister that had lived in my House and learnt my proper Characters, or shorthand, in which I wrote my Sermon Notes) had transcribed out of my Notes. And though I had no leisure, for this or other writings, to take much care of the style, nor to add any Ornaments or citations of Authors, I thought it might better pass as it was than not at all; and that if the Author mist of the Applause of the Learned, yet the Book might be profitable to the Ignorant, as it proved through the great Mercey of God'.

The 'Epistle Dedicatory' is addressed 'to the Inhabitants of the Burrough and Foreign of Kidderminster both Magistrates and People'; and here is a quotation from it which expresses Baxter's agony of heart in view of failure: 'I believe God, and therefore I know that you must every soul of you be converted or condemned to everlasting punishment. And knowing this I have told you over and over again. I have shewed you the proof and Reasons of it, and the certain misery of an Unconverted State. I have earnestly besought you, and begged of you to return; and if I had tears at command, I should have mixed all these exhortations with my tears; and if I had but time and strength (as I have not) I should have made bold to have come more to you, and sit with you in your houses, and entreated you on the behalf of your souls, even twenty times, for once that I have entreated you. The God that sent me to you knows that my soul is grieved for your blindness, and stubbornness and wickedness and misery, more than for all the losses or crosses in the world, and that my heart's desire and prayer for you to God is, that you may yet be converted and saved. But alas, I see not the answer of my desires. Some few of you (and I thank God they be but few) will not so much as come to see me, nor be willing that I should come to you to be catechised or instructed. Some of you still quarrel with the holy way in which you must walk if ever you will be saved. Some of you give up yourselves to the world, and thrust God out of your hearts and houses, and have not so much as a Chapter, or an earnest prayer put up to God, nor once a savoury word of Heaven from morning to night. . . . But above all it is the odious swinish sin of tipling and drunkenness and such like sensuality, that declareth many of you to be yet strangers to conversion. I have told you the danger of it; I have shewed you the Word of God against it. . . . I have told you, and told you an hundred times, with what a face these sins will look upon you in the end. And yet all will not do. For ought I yet see, as I found you, I must leave you; and after all my pains and prayers, instead of rejoycing in the hopes of your salvation, I must part with you in sorrow, and appear against you before the Lord as a witness of your wilfulness and negligence and impenitency'.

This has been quoted on purpose to reassert the fact that Baxter's success was not unmixed. There were many tares among the wheat, and in what proportion it is difficult to say for certain.[1] But I think we come very close to the truth in something he wrote a little later (about July 1658). He wants to demonstrate the superiority of the new Church-Order over the old; and so points to its fruits, e.g. in conduct. 'Look into

[1] See Appendix, 110, 6.

this County where I live, and you shall find a faithful, humble, laborious Ministry, Associated and walking in as great Unity as ever I read of since the Apostles' daies. No difference, no quarrels, but sweet and amicable correspondency and communion that I can hear of. Was there such a Ministry, or such love and concord, or such godly people under them in the Prelates Reign? There was not: I lived where I do; and, therefore, I am able to say, there was not. Through the great mercy of God, where we had ten drunken Readers then, we have not one now; and where we had one able, godly Preacher then, we have many now; and, in my own charge, where there was one that then made any show of the fear of God, I hope there are twenty now; and the Families that were wont to scorn at holiness, and live in open impiety, are now devoted to the worship and obedience of the Lord'.[1] An increase of twenty to one in the number of avowed Christians was surely a great record.

But for Baxter conversion was only the first step. The inexorable second lay in sincere obedience to the moral will of Christ. What he demanded, in the Name of Christ, was a thoroughly clean life, a thorough crucifying of the flesh, a thoroughly unselfish use of money, a thorough surrender to the practice of all good works. Thus, when Mr William Mountford, Bailiff of the Borough, desired him 'to write down a few brief Instructions for the due Execution of his Office of Magistrate, that he might so pass it as to have comfort and not Trouble in the Review,' he did so as a matter of course. To lift the municipal life to a higher plane seemed to him the Bailiff's obvious Christian duty – though the model he offered might be found too exacting for the average man.[2] And when he was invited by his friend Mr Thomas Foley, High Sheriff, 'to preach before the Judges' at Worcester (1657) his sermon on 'The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ' was a most searching application of the principle of sacrifice to the whole of life; and, in its published form, was preceded by a letter of truly prophetic power to the 'nobles, gentlemen, and all the rich' of England. It was from the same passion for reality in religion that he was led, towards the end of his ministry, to practise and recommend a modified form of 'Confirmation'. He felt 'the want of a due and solemn manner of Transition from the Number of Infant-Members into the Number of the Adult'; and that the too mechanical passage of the former into the full communion of the Church was productive of evils which helped the cause of 'Anabaptistry and Independency'. Hence he seems to have drafted his young people into classes, and put them through carefully graded stages of instruction, and admitted them to communion, in some 'due and solemn manner', only so often as they were believed to understand and feel its meaning.[1] His example was in the way of being widely imitated when the 'happy Restoration' cut this, and much else, short.

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[1] Preface to *Five Disputations of Church-Government and Worship* (1659).

[2] The advice was afterwards printed in 'an open sheet to stick upon a wall' for the use of other Magistrates. (*R.B.*, I, p. 117).

So the days flowed calmly by, with the blessing, which he esteemed the most precious, of 'many souls to his hire'; and many blessings beside – such as improved health and, in consequence, more time for study; and a happy home-life; and devoted assistants; and a loving, obedient united people; and the frequent companionship of likeminded brethren; and a name which drew to him (all unsought) the reverence and affection not merely of his own County, but also of myriads throughout the land. The intrusion now and then of excited Quakers, or a 'troublesome Acquaintance' with some 'scornful' gainsayer like Clement Walker of Worcester,[2] did but accentuate the prevailing calm. Truly, in these years he was on still waters; nor could he know that they were swiftly bearing him to his Niagara. And to whom did he owe the quiet procession of his days? Was it not to the man whom he denounced as a usurper; and considered a monstrous mixture of piety, hypocrisy and ambition? There were forces around him, mighty and malignant, which would have made short work of Baxter and his like, but for Cromwell's strong hand; and, if Cromwell had been vindictive, he would himself have made short work of Baxter. But he let him alone, and compelled others to leave him alone. Nay, he actively encouraged the agencies which made for godliness as both he and Baxter conceived it. As we have seen Baxter lived to see and own this with ungrudging regret. What surer token could he desire of an essentially good man? And yet Baxter appears never to have changed his opinion. The good fruit, after all, came from a corrupt tree!

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[1] He found his ideas so well presented by Rev Jonathan Hanmer (1606–87), Vicar of Bishops Tawton, Devonshire, in a book on *Confirmation* (1657) that he 'put a large Epistle before it'; but in 1658 he published a book of his own called *Confirmation the way to Reformation and Reconciliation*. So entitled in *R.B.*, I, p. 193, but on p. 117 he gives the title as *Confirmation and Restauration the necessary means to Reformation and Reconciliation*. The full title was much longer. His meaning seems to be (p. 2) that the restoration of confirmation to its 'primitive Nature and Use' would effectually reform the practice of Discipline, and (if owned generally by Episcopals, Presbyterians, Congregationals, Erastians, and even Anabaptists (as it had begun to be by the Worcestershire Association) would have 'a singular tendencie' to the 'Healing of the Churches' (see address to the Reader).

[2] A worthy who asserted e.g. that 'No man is bound to believe in Christ that doth not see confirming Miracles himself with his own eyes' (*R.B.*, I, p. 116).

Cromwell died on September 3, 1658; and storm-birds were at once on the wing. One of these was the Rev James Sharp, afterwards Archbishop of St Andrews, who called on Baxter in October 1657 with a letter from the Earl of Lauderdale, then prisoner at Windsor Castle, under cover of which he may quite probably have sounded Baxter as to his intentions if the weather broke up. But Baxter, though inflexibly loyal to Charles II in his heart, was not, at this time, prepared to work for his return; nor is it likely that he did more than listen politely to what Mr Sharp had to say. Providence, if it meant to bring back the King, had so far given no clear sign. When, therefore, Richard succeeded his father and the 'Nation' generally 'rejoiced' in 'his peaceable entrance upon the Government' Baxter felt no scruple about accepting him as a *de facto* ruler whom he was bound to obey. Indeed, he had great hopes of the new Protector, believing him to be, from all he had heard, a pious, high-minded and well-meaning man who might wish to confirm and complete his father's best work for religion. With this faith he addressed him in two open letters prefixed to two of his most important books, which were already written when Richard came into office. These letters were an occasion of deep offence to not a few even of Baxter's friends[1] who thought them inconsistent, or inexpedient, or worse. But he replied that what he had done was simply to provoke one, to whom 'the

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[1] Lauderdale among others.

Parliament' 'had sworn Fidelity', to a right use of his Power; and that he had written no 'Word of Approbation to his Title'.[1] This was true; nor was there any adulation in the letters. There was nothing but a respectful reminder of his providential opportunity, and his duty, as Baxter construed it. 'Many are persuaded that you have been strangely kept from participating in any of our late bloody contentions, that God might make you a Healer of our breaches and imploy you in that Temple work which *David* himself might not be honoured with, though *it was in his mind*, because he had *shed blood abundantly and made great Wars* (1 Chron. xxii. 7, 8)'. 'But if you could be the happy instrument of *taking away* the *Divisions* of the Godly, that there might be no such things as *Parties* or *Separations* known among them (though diversity of opinions there will be); and if you *could* give all the Ministers of the Nation a pattern of such Union of the tolerable dissenting parties in your own Pastors with whom you shall Communicate,[2] this would be the way to lift you high in the Esteem and Love of all your people, and make them see that you were appointed of God to be a Healer and Restorer; and to glory in you, and bless God for you as the instrument of our chiefest peace'.

Whether Richard ever read this, or felt moved to act upon it in accordance with Baxter's hope, we cannot say. In any case he had no chance: for on April 25, 1659, he was practically forced to dissolve his Parliament; 'and then he quickly fell himself'. Not unwillingly he withdrew into private life, and became politically of no account. The Army, by whose officers together with the Fifth Monarchy men 'and such like Firebrands', this revolution came about, took the helm and steered a course which brought the Ship of State *not* to their desired haven. What Baxter thought and felt may be seen not so well from his subsequent description of the conspiracy and its actors,[3] as from his meditations at the time. When the news reached him he was busy on his book the *Holy Commonwealth*, and had reached page 490.

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 118; cf. Pt. I, p. 100.

[2] i.e. choose for your Pastors, men, not separatist in their practice – Independents or Baptists!

[3] *R.B.*, I, p. 101. It was called the Wallingford House Conspiracy from the name of the Lieut.-Generals' Quarters where the chief actors met.

Here he wrote 'April 25, 1659 – unexpected turning out of the Parliament'; and passed into a stream of Meditations which reflect, in a deeply moving manner, his amazement, his regret, his despair, his hopes and fears, his final self-committal to the guidance of God. One thing soon grew clear to him – viz. that the Restoration was coming; and that his disappointed Schemes for Religion and Unity must now depend upon the possibility of negotiating terms with the King.

9

BAXTER AND HIS CORRESPONDENTS

THERE is nothing, perhaps, which better illustrates Baxter's character and influence than his correspondence – of which the specimens scattered throughout his Autobiography are but a fragment: for the bulk of it lies in six large folio volumes now among the Baxter MSS. of Dr Williams's Library. He was one who seems to have answered promptly every letter received, and with as much care as he gave to his sermons. Sometimes, indeed, his letters are sermons, more or less; more often they are a statement of reasons for his view of controverted questions, or against presumed errors; and not seldom they are his solution of practical points submitted to him by the perplexed. Here and there, too, there are welcome sidelights on himself. We do not expect, nor do we find, any humour or play of fancy. What he cared to handle was always something serious, and was dealt with in serious fashion. But his characteristic qualities – readiness of mind, inherent honesty, amplitude of knowledge, fairness, clear moral insight, and tact or sureness of touch – are nowhere more conspicuous; and, most of all, his quick and sympathetic understanding. It was these which explain the range and depth of his influence. People were drawn to him through his books or sermons; and, then, doubly drawn by his swift response to their need. From all parts of the land they wrote to him. Statesmen, Professors, ministers, students, parents, tradesmen, apprentices, women – and for each of them he found time and the fitting word. There are letters – both his own and those which called them forth – which one would like to quote at length. But this is impossible. What follows is meant to throw into relief just one fact – viz. – the variety of the persons who, for one reason or another, turned their faces to the Pastor of Kidderminster.

There is, for example, Thomas Dougherty who writes from Medbourne, Leicestershire, on December 15, 1651. From the end of his letter we gather that he had an Aunt of the same name at Kidderminster, with whom he had been staying; and his purpose in writing is to express his grateful sense of Baxter's kindness – 'his civilitie, mansuetude, and indulgence';

and especially 'the sweet effusion of his publick Ministry'. Though he gives no particulars about himself, it is easy to see that he was a young man. Baxter, too, was a young man (36); and, at this time, put young men in the forefront of his care.

Another young man, William Duncombe, writes from King's College, Cambridge, on September 12, 1652 – the first of five letters which together have a touch of Romance.

He introduces himself as a student of 'about three years standing in the University'; and a passionate admirer of Baxter. 'I cannot express with what ravishment of soul and rapture of affection I read them over – I mean your *Saints' Rest* and *Pædobaptism*'. But his object in writing is to beg for Baxter's 'counsel and instruction'. He is, it appears, a Parliamentarian; and, on that account, has been cast off by his father, an ardent Royalist. He is, however, concerned much less for himself than for his sister who 'is still under his' (the father's) 'wing' and is anxious to escape. In considering what to do to this end, he can think of no better way than to get her placed under Baxter's wing; and so 'humbly requests him to receive her as a boarder, or provide a place for her to sojourn in some pious family of Kidderminster'. Baxter's answer is not extant, but from the brother's second letter (October 20) it would seem that Baxter, for one thing, had asked for details. His sister – he says – is about 22 or 23 years of age, is unmarried, is not religious enough to face the dangers of London; while, as to temporal matters, she has money secured to her from their Mother but nothing from the father, who is deep in debt, and 'ready to break up housekeeping any time this half year'. Baxter, for another thing, had evidently advised him to gain his 'father's approbation' before removing his sister, to which he replies that it is no use trying. His third letter is dated February 15, 1652–3, and appears to have been written at once after the receipt of Baxter's second, for which he had waylaid the Carrier five or six times and grown nervously eager. It reveals the fact that Baxter, instead of encouraging a settlement of his sister at Kidderminster, had referred him to a Kidderminster youth then about to leave Cambridge, Thomas Doolittle. The brother thanks him but adds, in a P.S., that he understands Mr Doolittle has already left the University –

'however I will endeavour by some other means to effect the business about my sister'. Why Baxter should bring a youth, like Doolittle (aged about 21), into the 'business' is explained perhaps by the fact that he was on the point of settling in London as Pastor of St Alphage, London Wall, and that Miss Duncombe also was in London, or had set her heart on going there. Certainly Doolittle would befriend her in that case, if desired to do so by Baxter. But in his final letter (dated April 3, 1654)[1] it is made clear that his sister's errant heart had combined with circumstances to determine the 'business' otherwise than planned. She has not gone to London, nor can she come to Kidderminster, because her money has failed. 'My sister, being put off with £200 instead of £600 or £700, a moderate use of this at 6 per cent' will 'not board her'. Moreover, 'she is fallen into a love fit which hath I perceive made her averse' to his solicitous scheming for her benefit. The money difficulty might have been overcome: 'for I would have made (though a very hard) shift to have supplied' what she lacked. But she had chosen her own way and he is helpless. So, like a wise man, he resolves 'Cheerfully to submit to God'. It is curious to note that Baxter appears to have been silent about the sister in his next letter.

Nor did the brother mention her in his fifth (and last) – September 12 – except to say: 'I am very jealous of my sister although I have *not* ceased to ply her with letters this two years now, and the best books I could get; and I have had many good letters from her giving me more than ordinary hope – which I make bold to mention to you that I might obtain your prayers'. Here the curtain falls upon an Episode very honourable to Mr Duncombe, though (perhaps) tiresome to the sister. It was a case in which Baxter could hardly be of much service.

Incidentally the young man mentions that he has heard 'Dr Arrowsmith our Divinity Professor', as if Baxter had advised him to do so; and, further, that Antinomian opinions have but few sympathisers 'at *Oxford* among the Undergraduates'. 'Your hottest adverzaries lie among some of the Doctors and those that are more strictly for Calvin's way'. What is said here of Oxford may be hearsay, or a slip for Cambridge – more likely the latter, as Duncombe was writing from Cambridge, and Dr John Arrowsmith was Master of Trinity College there. Baxter's connection, in fact, was chiefly, not to say exclusively, with Cambridge; and it was to that University he sent his young men, partly, no doubt, because, under the Commonwealth, Oxford, to a large extent, was controlled by Independents like Dr John Owen and Dr Thomas Goodwin, with whom he had but imperfect sympathy. There is a letter from Arrowsmith to Baxter (dated Trinity College January 18, 1655–6) which illustrates the connection. It speaks of his 'testimonial to Read' as 'coming seasonably to help forward the procuring of his degree'; and of Potter (another of Baxter's protégés), 'now also a Bachelor', as 'a very good youth' who had failed to sit for a scholarship, 'but may be put into a capacity to sit hereafter for a fellowship'. Then, with regard to Baxter himself, he says: 'I have seen so much of your worth by your writings as that I have long much esteemed you'. Dr Arrowsmith was a Calvinist, though a moderate one, and did not, it seems, find Baxter far away from his own position. Nor did Dr Anthony Tuckney, Master of Emmanuel, – a very decided Calvinist – who wrote to Baxter from Cambridge on September 5, 1658 – in answer to some application which Baxter had made 'concerning Mr Hill's desire that his daughter ('my sister Clark') might buy that land which was sometimes his' – to the effect that though her father (Hill) 'hath been very unkind to us', yet 'as you wish it, so it shall be'. For I 'should be very sorry to deny you anything in my Power, to whom both myself and the Church owes so much for your holy and unweariable labours to her work'. Mr Hill must be Dr Thomas Hill (Master before Arrowsmith of Trinity College)[1] from whom there are three letters to Baxter between February 13, 1651–2 and September 12, 1653 – the second not dated – and two (one not dated) to him from Baxter, in one of which (March 8, 1651–2) he mentions 'your brother Doughty', meaning Dougherty perhaps, and thus indicating his kinship with the Thomas Dougherty whose Aunt was a Kidderminster resident.

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[1] Fourteen months later.

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[1] 1645. Arrowsmith succeeded him in 1649. He died on December 18, 1653, and his widow married Tuckney.

On the other hand, Oxford is represented by a letter of July 30, 1659, from Edward Jeffreys B.A. and Fellow commoner of Exeter College, in which he states a case of conscience and reports that a Quaker had been seen (he does not say by himself) walking 'naked through the Town'. Baxter's answer covering both points, was written a week later, August 6. This is the only letter from an Oxford man, so far as I have noticed, except one from Edmund Elis, of 'Baliol College', who wrote on March 11, 1657–8, in a strain of effusive eulogy: 'Never but in Holy Writ did I observe more life and vigour and mightiness of speech than I find in your works'. But, in his case, time and the times wrought a change; and thirty-two years later (October 9, 1690) he wrote from his parsonage at Totnes, Devonshire, in a strain of grandiloquent criticism, and devoted three folio pages to setting forth 'some of the many errors' which he had detected in the said works, particularly, it would seem, in the *Saints' Rest* and the *Breviate of Margaret Baxter*. There is no answer of Baxter's on record, if he thought it worth one.

Ministers were the majority of his correspondents; and the point of interest is that so many of them were unknown men. His correspondence with leaders like Revs Richard Vines and Thomas Gataker and Dr Manton and Henry Newcome was a matter of course. But that the Pastors of small places all over the country should know of him; and should be constrained by what they knew, to lay their difficulties before him, is surely an eloquent tribute to his reputation. This, however, was the fact. I have compiled a list – by no means complete – of thirty obscure men, ranging from Ubley in Devonshire to Clitheroe in Lancashire who wrote to him. Often the letters are as commonplace in style and topic as their writers were in Status. But they were not commonplace to Baxter. To him the writers were brothers in the Ministry of Christ who had honoured him with their confidence and whom it was a privilege to help.

Now and then, we come across something noticeable. Thus, Michael Edge, of Farmarks, nr. Repton, in his letter of December 25, 1655, refers to those 'who are too ready to overwhelm every dissenter from their own opinions with loud outcries of heresy'; and, as a case in point, to 'the outcry by several scholars' against the *Saints' Rest* on this score. Not at all a surprising fact. Again, in his letter of February 2, 1656–7, he gives it as his reason for attempting to imitate Baxter in a 'particular instruction of persons', or a dealing with them one by one, that he finds he does 'not reach them much from the pulpit' – the very experience which had driven Baxter himself to the practice.

Then we learn from the letters of John Beale – Stretton Grandson – August 14 and September 9, 1658 – why the Association movement came to a stop in Herefordshire. 'We have a peculiar discouragement' – he says – in that 'our ministers as our people', and *the people more than the Ministers*,[1] 'are for all and nothing in regard to Episcopacy', i.e. are utterly in favour of, or utterly against, the old order. There were but few who cared for Baxter's *via media* – a flash of light possibly on the general attitude of the people everywhere.

He subjoins a note about Mr Tombes who was in full swing at Leominster. 'Yr Antagonist Mr Tombes treads here so loftily as if all were his owne. *Stat pro ratione voluntas*. If the same blot did belong to some others there would be a loud outcry. But the man is not overbashful'.

Very interesting is the letter of William Mews, Eastington (July 20, 1653) in which he claims to have anticipated Baxter's scheme for 'the association and accommodation of Dissenting parties'. It is well-known – he says – that he had framed one of 'ye same cloath with yours some weeks before it'. Baxter does not dispute the claim, nor does Mews seem to make it in any spirit of jealousy. He is glad to know that Baxter has done what he has; and he is the man to whom Baxter wrote on August 6, 1659: 'I had almost accomplisht it' (i.e. a 'Reconciliation with many Pastors of Anabaptist Churches in London') 'but a few weeks before the change of Government'. Then he goes on, and 'I think it very hard dealings that by the Ministers of England I am left almost alone to contend with such as Pierce, Stubs, and the Papists and sectaries of all sorts, and that none will bear any part of the burden (save my friend Mr Hickman) . . . I rest, your unworthy Brother much obliged to love and honour you.

'RICHARD BAXTER'.

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[1] Italics mine.

Another notable letter is that of Robert Morton[1] Church Lanford (August 6, 1653) which, after urging him to publish his 'labours upon the Universal Redemption', says 'your books are much valued both in the Universities and in the country. Men enquire whether Mr Baxter will set forth any more'. Farther on he says 'I gather by your booke of the *Saints' Rest* that God has done much for you since I first knew you'. So it is as an old friend that he adds, touching Baxter's bodily infirmities, the sound advice – 'Spend not yourself in patching but get help'.

Near the same time, George Hopkins of Evesham in his letter of February 3, 1652–3, lets us see that it was not all smooth sailing with the ministers, to whom Baxter had submitted a Profession of Faith as a preliminary to their Association. 'Our brethren in these parts still insist upon the former addition in the article concerning the Holy Ghost'. He thinks the Deity of the Holy Ghost can be proved, and tries to prove it; and wards off Baxter's objections – no doubt to the effect that the proof went beyond 'what was written'– by bidding him beware of excessive reliance on the letter of Scripture. This is one of the earliest instances of that rift between Scripturists and Dogmatists which by the Arians of the next generation was widened into a gulf.

Lastly, Oliver Bromshal (or Brumskill), Chaplain to Lady Bromley in a letter of January 1, 1655–6, shows that one at least of Baxter's correspondents was not afraid to speak plainly. He had been reading and appreciating his *Book of the Truth of Scripture*. But his enjoyment had been checked by its long-windedness. So he asks: 'Why are yr sentences soe verie long, and draw forth even very farre contrarie to the rule Ne currat tanquam Flumen oratio'. Silence envelops Baxter's answer.

Ministers, professors, and students were his chief but not his only correspondents. John Brande e.g. aged 21 of London was an apprentice to Mr Thomas Langham, a silkman at the sign of the Angell in Cheapside, and his letter of August 10,

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[1] He was minister at St Anns Bewdley when Baxter came to Kidderminster and became his special friend. His son Richard (1637–98) was baptized at Ribbesford on July 30, 1637; lived to be Vicar of Kinver in 1659; and, after 1662, a physician.

1658, was a thankoffering. After 'a wicked life' he had been brought to repentance by reading *A Call to the Unconverted*; and would fain put himself under Baxter's direction. John Brodnan, another Londoner, was of a different stamp. In a letter of March 20, 1659–60, he tells the story of his religious experience; laments the undisciplined state of the Church even in London; and (presumably to enjoy the sort of discipline he desires) proposes to come and live at Kidderminster. Baxter's note to his answer is illuminating. 'My return to this (as to almost all of this nature) was diswasive. Tho' I could have filled this town and Parish with pious Gentlemen, to the great advantage of the poore, yet I have constantly hindered it, it being my Judgment that men should not get all together for their owne spirituall content but first consider where they may do God most service'. Baxter is careful in his use of words, yet he says here that he could have filled town and parish with pious gentlemen eager to settle there and enjoy his ministry! Kidderminster was indeed magnetic in those days. But he had no mind to make it a retreat for spiritual invalids.

Not one of these certainly was Major Thomas Grove M.P., Berry Court, Bucks; but he had stayed some time at Kidderminster as Baxter's guest, and wrote on November 15, 1655, to express most hearty thanks to him 'for feasting my body and soul.' What else he says is in the style of a hero-worshipper. He will pray that Baxter's health may increase to the long sparing of him to propagate the Gospel, set up Church Government according to God's mind, and vindicate and maintain truth in 'this madde and giddy age'.[1]

A layman of exceptional intelligence and moral courage who wrote to Baxter from Repton on October 31, 1653, and again in August 1654 was Richard Ford, a Mercer. In the first, he owns himself a debtor to Baxter for the great Benefit received by the perusal of his *Saints' Rest*, after thirty years' mental distress about predestination; but in the second he assails what Baxter says of 'unutterable perpetuall torments', with arguments based on the revealed character of God so powerfully put, that one wonders how Baxter could resist them.

Another tradesman was William Stephens 'linen draper at the Chapple on the Bridge in Bristoll' who wrote to Baxter on August 7, 1659, to say he was about to marry 'into a most religious family' but is conscious of something wrong with his own religion. He begs advice and encloses £5 to distribute 'in books and charity'.

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[1] For more about Mr Grove, see *R.B.*, III, p. 86.

The letter of a third layman, John Lewis Esq. of Glaskerreg Cardiganshire, dated May 25, 1656, is valuable on account of Baxter's footnote to it. Mr Lewis, having commended his *Unreasonableness of Infidelity*, had requested him to write of 'such traditions as may be well acknowledged' in worship, i.e. 'ceremonies'. 'This of Mr Lewis' – adds Baxter – 'with many other motives caused me to publish my *Five Disputations of Church Government*, *Liturgies and Ceremonies* which Bishop Morley and ye Lord Chancellor Hide produced before ye King and Lords and Drs at Worcester House at the Conferences: Morley then saying no man hath said better of this than Mr Baxter, though he shortly after silenced me without any change in me alleged'.

In the list of laymen there was also Richard Green a J.P. of Poulton Lancelyn, Cheshire, who (September 18, 1658) preferred the strange request that Baxter would write a treatise of Divinity in three columns 'showing both extremes and Truth in the Middle'. He appears to have heard of Baxter from 'pious Langley' whose praises of him he repeats. Whether Baxter took the request seriously or no is not said; but the request of Colonel Sir Edward Harley in a letter from Ludlow (September 2, 1656) for 'directions how to move in the ensuing Parliament for the service of the distressed Church' drew from him a letter of political and religious counsel covering several folio pages.

It is clear from at least two recorded cases that Baxter was a welcome resource to perplexed elders or Church officers in a crisis. Thus, a letter signed 'your humble servant Henry Burton', an elder of Trinity Church Coventry (May 10, 1652), is a vehement entreaty to Baxter that he would prevent Dr Bryan from removing to Shrewsbury. No doubt the Salop people want him, but his own people – whom he has acceptably served for eight years are unanimous for him to stay. So are 'the godly divines of Warwickshire and London'. There is no tangible reason for his going unless it be 'some irregular passages of two or three' individuals. Let Baxter, then, bring his powerful influence to bear on the Coventry side. If he complied with this request his influence prevailed: for Dr Bryan stayed on at Trinity Church till he was ejected in 1662; while the call of the Abbey Church was passed on to the Doctor's eldest son John – like his father and his father's brother Jarvis (Minister of Old Swinford) a devoted admirer of Baxter. Before 1656, however, Mr Bryan had removed to St Chad's of the same town and the Abbey Church was again vacant. Whereupon a call was sent to Rev Henry Newcome, then at Gawsworth in Cheshire; and, once more, Baxter's good offices were invoked. 'The determination is in yourself' wrote elder Thomas Heyes on November 27; and his own signature to the letter was backed up by those of nineteen others. Meanwhile Newcome had already (September 27) consulted Baxter, and, by the time of his third letter (November 26), had also received 'an unanimous invitation' to succeed 'precious Mr Houldsworth' at Cross Street Manchester. Both places have their difficulties, he points out to Baxter, and what was Baxter's final advice we cannot say; but Newcome, as every one knows, went to Manchester.

Last, but not least, we must take note of several 'devout women' who wrote to Baxter. One of these was Mary Rogers wife of Colonel or Captain[1] Rogers, Governor of Hereford. Two of her letters are extant. The first, dated August 22, 1658, is all about the benefits she has received from his Ministry and writings. She had spent some time in Kidderminster, and says – 'I never enjoyed so much the beams of his grace before my lot was cast in your town; and how often have you resolved my doubts and quieted my troubled spirit'. Others share her feelings. 'Here are many good people who acknowledge themselves much bound to the Lord and you for your books, especially your *Rest*'. In the second, of 'September ye 16th' she says: 'Captain (her husband?) presents his servis to you'; and on the 17th Baxter signs his reply 'your faithful friend and servant'.

A more interesting case is that of Katherine Gell who wrote in July 1655 from Hopton House Derbyshire as 'a stranger', relating her religious experience and seeking light on some dark places in the *Saints' Rest.* The bearer of her letter, it appears, was an inmate of her house, with troubles of her own which Baxter might be able to relieve. For herself, she says – 'I heartily wish we could see you one week in this county that we might also heare you – of which I have an earnest desire, and had I not so great a family to leave, I should endeavour the fulfilling my desires in coming to you'. Baxter's answer was immediate and accompanied by one of his books. Other letters followed, on both sides, down to June 1, 1657, when he met a narrative of her haunting liability to nameless and groundless fears by a characteristic bit of autobiography: 'When I was younge (yea till 20 yeares of age) I durst not have gone into a darke roome alone; or, if I did, ye feare of it would have made me even tremble. I knew the folly of this, and both Reason and (I think) grace did contradict it; and yet I was not able to overcome it, no, nor one moment to forbeare it, if I might have had the world. Even such doe I take your case to be. Feare and griefe, above all passions, are le(a)st at ye comand of reason and will. I can force the wisest man on earth into a sudden feare whether he will or no. My deare friend ye Lady Rous was as far from overmuch passionate sensibility as most women yt ever I knew; and yet the Love of her Husband workt so strongly, by sudden fright upon falling into a feaver, that shee presently fell into one herselfe; and continued in feare of him till shee was past apprehension, and so dyed, wn *he* recovered'. This did not end the correspondence. Two further letters from Mrs Gell were answered by a further two from Baxter, in the last of which (September 2, 1658) he enumerates for her a list – filling two folio columns – of his publications 'controversiall and practicall'.

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[1] The first letter is endorsed 'Colonel' but Mrs Rogers seems to call him 'Captain' (see *infra*).

Finally, there is Mrs Barbara Lambe wife of Thomas Lambe who had been a member, for twelve or thirteen years – and latterly an elder – of John Goodwin's Church in Coleman Street London; and then turned Baptist 'through the means of another member of that body, Mr Allen, a very good and holy man'.[1] This acceptance of Baptist views led to a separation from Mr Goodwin's fellowship; and the setting up of a distinct Church – which in the course of five years grew from twenty to about 100 members. But as time passed, Mr Lambe became very unhappy. He was troubled by the conduct and teaching of some of the brethren; and especially by their narrowness 'in unchurching all besides themselves'. He could not help doubting the lawfulness of the 'separation'; and then, doubting his doubts, as perhaps a temptation of the devil. So it went on for eight months, when his wife, distressed by the sight of his misery, resolved to write to Mr Baxter. Her letter is dated from 'London in Great Bartholomew's', 'this 12th of August, 1658'. Conscious of her 'boldness' in thus addressing one unknown to her 'by face', she excuses herself on the threefold ground that want of personal acquaintance 'is no impediment to the communion of Saints', that she writes 'out of much affliction of Heart and in many Tears', and that she has gathered enough from his writings to assure her that Baxter, being experienced himself 'in Spiritual Affairs and Temptations,' is well fitted to speak a word in season. Then, after describing the case and begging light on six Particulars, she concludes:

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[1] Allen had been converted to Anabaptism by Mr Fisher, 'since Quaker'.

'Now, sweet Mr *Baxter*, shall I have so much Grace in your sight as to have your distinct answer to these Particulars, truly it will be Service to Jesus Christ whom we have desired to serve in all singleness of Heart from our Youth up, and have no desire in this World like to this, to know His will and to do it. . . .' 'I trust it is of God that put it into my Heart to write to you. . . . I acquaint none that I do it. Were it known, it might occasion me some farther *Tryals: therefore I intreat your secrecy in it.*' In a P.S. she says 'Sir, I desire what you write in answer may be enclosed in a cover to Mr James Marshall in Friday Street at the Half Moon, who is my Son in Law, and so I shall have it with privacy. I shall long to know that these come safe to your Hands'.

On the 22nd of the same month Baxter wrote an answer of four folio pages. It was Sunday – Mrs Lambe's letter having reached him the night before 'near Bedtime.' He 'thought it no Sin to make' his answer 'a part of this Lord's Day's Work'. And she must have felt on receipt of it that she had indeed been divinely guided. For she would feel it to be a satisfying letter, even more in its delicacy of touch and tenderness of tone, than in its arguments.

Here are two or three of the opening sentences:

'How true did I feel it in the reading of your Husbands Lines[1] and yours, which you say in the beginning, that unacquaintedness with the Face is no hindrance to the Communion of the Saints: so much of Christ and his Spirit appeared to me in all your Writings, that my soul in the reading of them was drawn out into as strong a stream of Love and closing Unity of Spirit as almost ever I felt in my Life. There is a Connaturality of Spirit in the Saints that will work by Sympathy, and by closing uniting inclinations, through greater Differences and Impediments than the external Act of Baptism – as a Load-Stone will exercise its attractive Force through a Stone Wall. I have an inward sense in my Soul that told me so feelingly in the reading of your Lines, that your Husband and you and I are one in our dear Lord so that if all the self-conceited Dividers in the World should contradict it on the account of Baptism, I could not believe them'. Mrs Lambe's grateful acknowledgment is dated September 4th[b]. On the 16th Mr Lambe wrote himself – urged thereto by his wife, who sent his letter off, with one of her own, on the 20th. Baxter replied on the 29th; and (*inter alia*) gave a forcible defence of the parochial conception of the Church as against the separatist.

Another letter from Mr Lambe on January 15, 1658–9, called forth another from Baxter on the 22nd. Two others from Lambe of June 4, 1659[b] and April 5, 1660[b2] seem to have closed the correspondence – of which the practical effect may be seen in what Baxter wrote years later (*R.B.*, II, p. 180 and III, p. 180).

As to Mrs Lambe the letter of September 20, 1658, was apparently her last word, at least on the case of her husband. But – 'my Wife presents her Love, with many Thanks to You' is a P.S. to the latter's letter of January 15, 1658–9.

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[1] Perhaps the 'three sheets of Paper' in which Mr Lambe had set down his thoughts, which Mrs Lambe enclosed with her letter.

[2] The letters marked [b] are in the Baxter MSS., the rest are in *R.B.*, Appendix III.

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HIS HOME-CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Baxter had a wide circle of friends – how wide may be seen from the chapter on his correspondents, or by a glance at those pages of his autobiography (*R.B.*, III, pp. 90–8) where he recites list after list of the men whom he knew well enough to warrant him in describing their character. They amount to many scores. But his dearest friends were, locally, his nearest; and nearest of all seem to have been some who lived in or near the town. Such was Rev Robert Morton, Minister at Bewdley when Baxter first came to Kidderminster and father of Dr Richard Moreton. Among neighbouring ministers he was his oldest friend and second to none in his love. Such, too – in less degree – was the Rev Henry Oasland, the minister at Bewdley who succeeded Mr Tombes[1] – 'the most lively, fervent, moving Preacher in all the County, of an honest, upright life who rode about from place to place preaching fervently and winning many Souls to God, besides all his very great Labours with his own People, publickly, and from house to house'. Belonging to the same town was a layman, 'Mr William Hopkins, the most eminent, wise and truly religious magistrate of *Bewdley* (my old dear friend) at last a member of the Long Parliament'. Another native of Bewdley was Rev John Spilsbury, Minister of Bromsgrove – not specially a friend of Baxter's and accounted an Independent – but a man of 'extraordinary worth for moderation, peaceableness, ability, and ministerial diligence and an upright life'. When Baxter took charge in 1641 he found a friend in Rev John Cross who lived at *Kinver* and 'had been the chief means of the good which was done in *Kidderminster* before my coming thither'. It bespeaks strong mutual confidence that the young minister asked him, and that the old minister consented, 'to take every second day in a weekly Lecture'. This means that Baxter set up the Thursday Lecture which the Committee asked for; but did not preach himself save once a fortnight – no doubt, a welcome relief with two sermons to prepare for the 'Lord's Day'. I have quoted elsewhere Baxter's generous (and of course just) eulogy of his assistants Richard Sarjent, who became minister of Stone, and Humphrey Waldern who became minister of Broom; also, of Thomas Baldwin senior, the town Schoolmaster, who became minister of Chaddesley.

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[1] Not immediately. Edward Bury (1649–50) came between.

Natives of Kidderminster who grew up under him and whom he encouraged, or helped, to enter the ministry were Joseph Read, Edward Boucher, Simon Potter, and Thomas Doolittle.

Edward Boucher was 'a young man of great humility, sincerity, peaceableness and good ministerial parts', who became minister of Churchill; and it was his distinction to be brother to James Boucher, a Husbandman (or small Freeholder), 'who can but write his Name, and is of as good understanding in Divinity as many Divines of good account, and more able in Prayer than most Ministers that ever I heard. And of so calm a Spirit, and blameless a life, that I never saw him laugh or sad, nor ever heard him speak an Idle Word, nor ever heard Man accuse him of a sinful Word or Deed'.

He lived at Wannerton, a secluded spot two miles or so from Kidderminster, off the Birmingham Road; and it was in his house – one imagines in the big kitchen – that Baxter spoke his farewell sermon in the autumn of 1661 after he had been silenced by Bishop Morley.

Joseph Read was one of the boys whom Baxter supported at the University – perhaps the son of Thomas Read who signed both the earlier and later call to Baxter. After finishing at Cambridge he returned to Kidderminster, and lived in Baxter's house; and for a year, was assistant to him before settling at Whitley (nine miles away): 'A man of great sincerity and worth' – says Baxter. He lived fifty-one years after his ejectment in 1662; for the first few years 'in the Country' and the rest in or near London – where he attached himself to Baxter. At his service in Bloomsbury he 'read the scripture sentences, the 95th Psalm, the Psalms for the Day, and the two Chapters for the Day, and sung the Psalms appointed for Hymns, and recited the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, when Mr Baxter Preached'.[1]

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[1] Calamy account of the . . . ejected . . . Ministers, vol. ii, 775. It will be noticed how this answers to the order of Service, in the Reformed Liturgy which we suppose Baxter to have used at Kidderminster.

At his own house, also, in the parish of St Giles he fitted up (with the help of friends) a private chapel for the use 'of the poor People' around him; and suffered imprisonment once and again in consequence. Like Baxter, he incurred unpopularity with extremists on account of his moderate Nonconformity; and, like Baxter, he defended himself (1682) in a printed statement. Baxter to the last was his hero, as we may see from his preface to a book on 'Universal Redemption' written by Baxter more than forty years before, but published by Read in 1694 – three years after his death. Here he says – 'the first work he put me upon' (as his Assistant in 1657) 'was to transcribe these Papers . . . which he designed for the Press' but did not decide to publish till July 17, 1691, when 'he gave them to me' to that end. . . . 'That which I earnestly desire is that young Ministers and especially all candidates for the Ministry would put on humbleness of mind, and set themselves at the feet of this Great Man as Learners; and then, through the divine blessing, I doubt not but their profiting will appear unto all men'. In the same preface he says – 'It was a great word of Bishop Wilkins that Mr Baxter had cultivated every subject he had handled', and that 'if he had lived in the Primitive times, he had been one of the Fathers of the Church. And again, It was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr Baxter'. Read thought such praise deserved, but added 'his works praise him much more than the Tongues or Pens of the greatest Doctors or best of men can do'.

Simon Potter, another poor Kidderminster boy sent by Baxter to the University, did not turn out so well. He was Read's 'intimate acquaintance', a student with him at Trinity College, and ordained at the same time; and when in 1662 his friend told him what he had heard about the terms of Conformity, he made answer 'that he would be hanged up at his door rather than conform'. But he conformed, nevertheless. He could not bring himself to leave his comfortable living at Wolverly, but stayed on – to his own misery. For he confessed to Read 'some time after' that 'God had never blessed his ministry since'.

According to Calamy Thomas Doolittle also was sent to Cambridge by Baxter. But the latter does not say so; and what may be gathered as to his father's position makes it improbable. He was born at Kidderminster about 1632 and owed his conversion to Baxter's discourses on the 'Saints' Rest'[1] – when in his eighteenth or nineteenth year. It was this which decided him for the ministry instead of the law; and no doubt, it was with his Pastor's encouragement that he went to Cambridge. His College was not Trinity but Pembroke.[2] In 1653 he accepted – 'with great diffidence' it is said – charge of St Alphage, London Wall, where he applied himself to 'his work with all his might', for the next nine years. There are letters extant between him and Baxter during this period which attest their mutual affection and his abundant reverence.[3] In 1662 he retired to Moorfields and set up a boarding-school, which had great success.

A few years later he erected – though against the law – a meeting-house in Bunhill-fields; and then (this proving too small) a larger one in Monkwell Street. How he managed to escape arrest is an interesting story; but his meeting-house did not escape. 'The Justices came and had the pulpit pulled down, and the door fastened, with the King's broad arrow set upon them'. In several other places his house was rifled, and his person often in danger; but somehow he always eluded capture. He spent his last years (subsequent to the Toleration Act) quietly ministering to his former congregation at Monkwell Street and died in 1707 – 'the last of the ejected ministers in London'. Baxter describes him as 'a good scholar, a godly man of an upright life and moderate Principles, and a very profitable serious Preacher'.

Besides *natives* of Kidderminster there are several not natives but residents or near neighbours whom Baxter specially singles out as his friends. Of these the most prominent are Colonel

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[1] These were delivered as Thursday lectures before publication (with additions) in 1650.

[2] Admitted sizar (aged 17) at Pembroke, June 7, 1649, son of Anthony Doolittle of Kidderminster, Glover. B.A. 1652–3, accepted St Alphage 1653. Athenæ Cantab. by J. & J. A. Venu. The sizarship certainly points to poverty.

[3] Baxter MSS. (Letters), vols. vi, f. 28^{a}.
" " " " i, f. 121–2.
" " " " i, f. 125^{ab}–126^{b}.
" " " " i, f. 123^{a}.

John Bridges, Mr Thomas Foley and Mrs Charlton. The first was a man of Puritan temper who had bought the patronage of Kidderminster from the Papist Sir Edward Blount. He had a house in the Town; and his wife Margaret was at least as devoted to Baxter as himself. It was for her that Baxter wrote *The Right Method for a settled Peace of Conscience and spiritual Comfort* (1653) – one of the best of his practical treatises; and it was to her husband, with Mr Thomas Foley and Anne his wife, as well as to herself that he dedicated the book. The Colonel's Military duties often took him from home – a fact made clear by numerous references to his employment under the Commonwealth and Protectorate[1]; but when at home his work as a Justice of the Peace, his presence at the Church, and his unfailing support of its Ministry must have been a comfort to Baxter.

'A prudent pious gentleman' is Baxter's judgment of him. Through him he corresponded with the Dublin Ministers who tried to plant an Association on the Worcestershire Model in Ireland.[2] Through him and Mr Foley he obtained a fair hearing for his Petition (signed by more than 6,000 men of the County) to Parliament on behalf of the established Ministry and Tithes. And he was proud of him when early in 1660 the Colonel, with a few officers, 'resolved upon a desperate surprizal of Dublin Castle', and snatched it from the Anabaptists 'without any bloodshed'. 'Had it not been for that action it is probable that Ireland would have been the Refuge and Rendezvous for the disbanded Army' – in 1660 – and so a means of rekindling civil war. But (says Baxter) he got no reward except a good conscience; and a baseless charge of malversation which almost ruined him.[3] Then, 'soon after, he died of a fever at Chester; and went to a more peaceable and desirable world'.

Prior to his death, however, he had sold the patronage of

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[1] See *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, 1642–60. Edited by Professor Firth. 2 vols.

[2] He is named as a commissionary for Ireland to ensure the security of his Highness the Lord Protector, November 29, 1656 (*ibid.*, II, p. 1041).

[3] See *State Papers Domestic*, 1660–61, p. 81. Information by Charles Talbot against Colonel Bridges, Governor of Warwick Castle, for seizing the late King's carriages about the time of the battle of Naseby and Edghill. June 1660.

Kidderminster to Mr Thomas Foley, a little before the death of the old Vicar Mr Dance.[1] He did so on condition, readily accepted by Mr Foley, that he should 'present' Baxter, 'if he were capable' – i.e. willing to conform. Thus the two were united in their attachment to Baxter; and his attachment to them was equal. 'You dwell together' – he says – 'in my estimation and Affection. One of you[2] is a Member of the Church which I must Teach and legally the Patron of its Minister and Maintenance; the other, a special branch of that family[3] which I was first indebted to in this County. You lately joyned in presenting to the Parliament the Petition of this County for the Gospel and a faithful Ministry. When I only told you of my intention of sending some poor Scholars to the University, you freely and joyntly offered your considerable Annual allowance thereto, and that for the continuance of my life, or their necessities there. I will tell the world of this, whether you will or no; not for your applause but for their imitation; and the shame of many of far greater estates that will not be drawn to do the like'.

Thomas Foley was one of the few men who laid to heart, and lived, the doctrine of that great sermon which Baxter preached before him (as High Sheriff) and the Judges, at Worcester in April 1658; and of the wonderful address to the 'Nobles and Gentlemen and Rich' which he prefixed to it when published.[4] In a generation or two the Foleys rose from so called 'common' to noble rank and held a great place in the County; but it was plain Mr Foley who took out the first true patent of nobility. His father and grandfather had begun to do it; but their opportunities were comparatively small. It was Thomas 'who from almost nothing, did get about £5,000 per annum or more by Iron works; and that with so Just and blameless Dealing that all Men that ever he had to do with, that ever I heard of, magnified his great integrity and honesty, which was questioned by none'. There lay his patent of nobility; and the root of it was his religious faith. He was – says Baxter emphatically – 'a Religious Faithful Man'. He used his money, therefore, as God's steward to whom he must give account. Hence, for example, 'he purchased among other lands the Patronage of several great places, and, among the rest, of Kidderminster and Stourbridge; and so chose the best conformable Ministers to them that could be got'. Hence, too, 'in thankfulness to God for his Mercies to him', he 'built a well-founded hospital near Stourbridge to teach poor children to read and write – and then set them apprentices – and endowed it with about £500 a year'. Acting from the same religious motive, he 'placed his eldest son's Habitation in Kidderminster,[1] which became a great Protection and blessing to the Town' – the son like the father, being 'a religious and worthy man', whose influence on the Town's business and social life was uplifting.[2] 'Such worthy Persons, and such strange Prosperity and holy use of it, are so rare; and the interest of my good neighbours in it so great, that I thought meet to mention it to God's praise and his'.

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[1] As Mr Dance died about the Date of the (2nd) Act against conventicles (1670), evidently Colonel Bridges was then living (*R.B.*, III, p. 71).

[2] Colonel Bridges.

[3] Son and grandson of the Richard Foleys, senior and junior.

[4] Under the title *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* dedicated, to 'my worthy friend, Thomas Foley Esq'.

Some of Baxter's best friends and helpers in the parish were women – such as Mrs Bridges and 'good old Mrs Doughty (sometime of Shrewsbury) . . . who was among us an excellent example of holiness'. But the most notable of these was Mrs Charlton the mother of Baxter's wife Margaret, who 'removed from her ancient habitation (at Appley in Shropshire) to Kidderminster'. Her first husband Francis Charlton Esq died before the war; and the second, Thomas Hanmer Esq, was also dead when, partly to escape family trouble and chiefly to enjoy Baxter's ministry, she settled in a large house near the Churchyard towards the end of 1656. Here she lived till he went up to London in 1660. 'Before she had lived there a twelvemonth . . . she died of the Fever, then very common in the City'. Baxter preached her funeral sermon[3] at St Mary Magdalene Church in Milk Street[1] from Acts vii. 59, Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit; and here is what he found her to be in his 'familiar acquaintance' 'omitting all the rest of her life': 'The Graces which I discerned to be eminent in her were these. She was eminent in her contempt of the Pride, and Pomp and Pleasure, and Vanity of the World, and in her great averseness to all these. She had an honest impatiency of the life which is common among the rich and vain-glorious in the world: Voluptuousness and Sensuality, excess of Drinking, Cards and Dice she could not endure whatever names of good housekeeping or seemly deportment they borrowed for a mask. In her apparel she went below the garb of others of her rank, indeed in such plainness as did not notifie her degree; but yet in such a grave and decent habit as notified her sobriety and humility. She was a stranger to Pastimes and no companion for Time-wasters as knowing that persons so near Eternity, that have so short a life and so great a work, have no time to spare. Accordingly in her latter days, she did (as those that grow wise by the experience of the vanity of the world) retire from it, and cast it off before it cast off her. She betook herself to the society of a people[2] that were low in the world, of humble, serious, upright lives, though such as had been wholly strangers to her. And among these poor inferiour strangers she lived in contentment and quietness; desiring rather to converse with those that would help her to redeem the time, in prayer and edifying conference, than with those that would grieve her by consuming it on their lusts'.

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[1] Said to have been on the site in Church Street now occupied by the premises of Messrs Tomkinson and Adam.

[2] Baxter says that he chose the place of residence for his 'two other sons' (also religious men) with a view to the same end: not where they could get most; but where they could give most, and do most good. How strange it sounds in these suburban days!

[3] The last work of a Believer . . . 1682, p. 2 (in address to the Reader).

Lastly, Nevil Simmons was not exactly one of Baxter's friends; but, as the publisher of most of his books between the years 1655 and 1681 (above fifty of them) he necessarily had very frequent dealings with him. He was, besides, a person of some consequence in Kidderminster, at least in his time of prosperity. An illustration of this may be found in the fact that 'Simon Potter,[3] Master of the Grammar School, conveyed land in 1667 to Simmons and others for a school for godly poor parents to be taught to read the Bible and say the Assembly's Catechism'; and it is worthy of notice that from the said bequest, together with one of property by Elizabeth Bowyer in 1701 for the same purpose, originated the Old Meeting Schools in Orchard Street (Burton: *History of Kidderminster*, p. 143).

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[1] It was ready for publication on January 31, 1661–2; and was reprinted in (August) 1682.

[2] Those of Kidderminster.

[3] This very likely was the father of Simon Potter, the minister. There is a letter from him to Baxter 'at Mr Tho Foley's in Austin Friars' and inscribed

Baxter's first publishers were Thomas Underhill and Francis Tyton, of London; and before the death of the former in 1665, and the temporary ruin of the latter by the great Fire of 1666, Simmons was not often employed. But afterwards he had in hand most of his books down to the time (about 1684) when Thomas Parkhurst took them up. He did not print. The Printing was done for him, usually in London. He simply made himself responsible for the printing, the selling and the price. In the course of time we find him yielding place to other members of his family – either Thomas Simmons (perhaps his son) or B. Simmons (perhaps his wife). Possibly his partial retirement was forced upon him by age or (more likely) incompetence. For in 1678 he became bankrupt, or (as Baxter puts it) he 'broke'. And thereby hangs a tale. When news of his failure spread abroad, the blame of it was laid on Baxter. People said he had taken from him too much money for his books – had in fact, squeezed the poor man to death. But considering that he had been the means of enriching him more than other of his patrons; and 'had given him (in meer charity) the gains of £500, if not above £1,000', such a calumny was intolerable, and compelled Baxter to write a letter of self-vindication.[1] He had been compelled to a like step twenty years before.[2] At that time, the story went that Underhill and Tyton as well as Simmons were the victims of his covetousness. He had got out of them it was said – 'a return' of £300 or £400 a year; so that they were driven to sell his books at excessive rates'. There was, of course, not a tittle of truth in the charge.

'e scholâ nostrâ Ked^{nsi} cal. Sep. 1660'. It is in Latin – expressing sorrow on account of Baxter's poor state of health, reporting the death of pious Mrs Clark, and dealing with some unnamed censor of Baxter's writers (Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. iv, ff. 151–2^{b}).

[1] *R.B.*, III, p. 182, and Appendix I, No. vii.

[2] See note attached to *Five Disputations for Church Government*. July 1658.

No man living thought less of his own gain. Nor need he have troubled to rebut it, so far as his friends were concerned. But as he says, he had others to think of whom the evil report 'might hinder from profiting by his labours in the calling that God had placed him in'.

It is to be hoped that Nevil Simmons did and said nothing to countenance a slander which, better than anyone else, he knew to be baseless. There is no reason to think otherwise. At any rate, Baxter did not throw him over. His shop in Kidderminster (one wonders just where it stood) still exhibited Baxter's books, old and new, for sale. The only discernible difference is that after 1678, Thomas or B. Simmons is more to the fore than the old man.

II

THE WORCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION

BAXTER's passionate desire for the Church was its visible Unity; and his favourite motto – in things necessary, Unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things charity – points to what he believed to be its proper basis.

There are essential truths in which all genuine Christians are at one. These, therefore, constitute a common foundation upon which all Christians stand. Everything else, however important, is secondary. Unite, then, on these. Let these, and these only, be laid down as the terms of communion. Come together in virtue of these. Love one another for the sake of these. As to doubtful points discuss them in a Spirit of Charity. Agree to give and take. You will find the range of your agreement wider than you think; and tending constantly to expand. Meanwhile, give to others the liberty you claim from them. This in brief was his 'Cure for Church divisions'; and its theoretical efficacy is manifest. But the difficulty lay in getting it to work. For it presupposed a general abhorrence of the very temper which it was designed to cure; and this temper – the sectarian – was in his day everywhere rampant. Never before had it been more prevalent or aggressive. Nor was it confined to the so-called sects, but was hardly less violent in the great organized Church parties. Baxter realized this, to some extent, even before he began to act. He had seen enough to convince him that 'every man that had once given up himself to a Party, and drowned himself in a Faction did make the Interest of that Faction or Party to be his own'.

Nothing, consequently, but the grace of God, creating a new heart and mind in men could really bring about Christian Unity. Still, there must be, in every sect or party, some – perhaps many – who did not confound their sect or party with the Church Catholic; and many more of a catholic disposition who would fain find a common meeting-place outside all sects or parties. Was it possible to get at such as these, and bring them openly together? This was the question which Baxter set himself to answer. His decision to do so marked a solemn turning-point in his life:

'I stood still some years, as a looker-on, and contented myself to *wish* and *pray* for Peace, and only drop now and then a word for it in my practical Writings' . . . and 'the chief Reason was Despair. I was so conscious of my meanness and inconsiderableness in the Church that I verily thought but very few will regard what I said. But when I once attempted it God convinced me of this Error, and, shewed me how little Instruments signifie when he will work' (*R.B.*, I, p. 146).

His immediate aim had reference to the four outstanding parties – the Erastian, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent. After a 'most serious study' of what was peculiar and common to each of these, he arrived at the conviction that there was enough of 'the true and good among them all' to offer a spacious platform for mutual fellowship in co-operative effort. 'I perceived . . . that every Party before mentioned, having *some Truth* or *Good* in which it was more eminent than the rest, it was no impossible thing to separate all that from the Error and the Evil, and that among all the Truths which they held either in Common or in Controversy, there was no contradiction; and, therefore, that he that would procure the Welfare of the Church must do his best to promote all the *Truth* and Good which was held by every part, and to leave out all their Errors and their Evil, and not take up all that any Party had espoused as their own'. (*Ibid.*)

When, however, he set forth this view to some eminent leaders of the respective parties he found their attitude discouraging. So was that of the London Ministers, as a whole, to whom, he also 'motioned the business'. The Revs. Richard Vines and Thomas Gataker seem to have been the only avowed sympathizers. He, therefore, determined to attempt a practical beginning at home – and the result was the Worcestershire Association.

I have mentioned the monthly meeting of Ministers at Baxter's house on the first Thursday. It was at one of these in the spring of 1652[1] that he opened his mind; and met with a pleasant surprise. For the views he set forth were at once welcomed – especially his first proposal that they should adopt a common scheme of discipline. The need of this in his own congregation had become pressing; and he found it was not less so in theirs. Moreover, he had a scheme *ready* which he 'thought most agreeable to the Word of God'; and, after hearing his outline of it, they all appear to have thought the same. This, therefore, and the rest of his 'Design' he laid before a larger meeting at Worcester[1] with the result that he was commissioned to draw up 'a form of Agreement'. It was to consist of 'so much of the Church Order and Discipline, as the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Independent are agreed in, as belonging to the Pastors of each particular Church'. Very soon he 'brought in' not only the Form but also the Reasons of its several points – 'which after sufficient Deliberation and Examination (with the alteration of some few words) were consented to by all the Ministers that were present; and after several Meetings we subscribed them and so associated for our mutual help and concord in our Work'.

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[1] Writing in October, 1653, he says: 'It is near a year and a half since we began our consultations' (*R.B.*, II, p. 165). From a paper in the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. i, f. 292^{ab}, 293–297^{b}, dated May 10, 1652, it is evident that

The first plank in the Association platform was discipline. What else was added to complete it may be seen in his *Christian Concord*.[2] Here, too, may be read the Rules of the Association, as follows:

(1) 'We Judge it convenient to meet in five several Associations at five several places in this county, viz. at Worcester, Evesham, Upton, Kidderminster and Bromsgrove, and this once a month on a day to be agreed on (or oftener if need require).

(2) We shall not, by dividing the county, presume to limit others to any one of these Associations, but let every Minister, according to his own convenience, choose to which of these Associations he will join himself; and accordingly subscribe to a copy of these Articles, which shall be kept at the place of meeting for that Association; and so may any Minister that shall hereafter joyn with us, who at the present doth not.

the 'consultations' had already issued in a scheme of proposals. Baxter sent a copy of these, with a letter, to John Dury (1596–1680) on February 5, $165\frac{2}{3}$ (Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. vi, ff. 94–95^b).

[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 148.

[2] '. . . or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire; with Richard Baxter's Explication and Defence of it and his Exhortation to Unity . . . 1653.'

(3) We shall give notice to all Ministers of piety and competent ability, who now are not among us, and desire them to joyn with us, and offer them a free debate of any thing which they may scruple, and desire them to adjoin themselves to which association they judge most convenient.

(4) We shall at these monthly meetings keep up a publique Lecture for the Common benefit.

(5) At these meetings we shall maintain some disputation or other exercise, which shall be found most useful to our own edification, especially for the younger sort of Ministers, or else meet on purpose for this, another day.

(6) We shall here endeavour, on consultation, to resolve all particular doubts that arise about Discipline or Worship or Doctrine, which (for the avoiding of all occasions of division) we have not thought fit to make the matter of this agreement, or which these general Rules suffice not to determine.

(7) We shall here also produce and propose to consideration, any new point of Doctrine wherein we differ from the most of the Reformed Churches, before we adventure to teach it to our hearers.

(8) We shall here debate all differences in Judgment (fit for debate) that may happen among ourselves, or any of our People.

(9) We shall here receive any complaint that any people have against any member of our Association, for scandal, false doctrine or Maladministration; and we all resolve to give an account of our Doctrine and actions, when any offended brother shall so accuse us, both for the satisfaction of the church and him.

(10) We shall here make known the Names of all those whom we have put out of our Communion; and we resolve all of us to refuse communion with such, and not to receive them into one church who are cast out of another, except they have given satisfaction, or we first here prove them unjustly cast out.

(11) We desire that all young Ministers, or any that are not well furnished with discretion, or ability to manage those publick reproofs and censures, would do nothing in it without first consulting these Assemblies. Yea, in so weighty a case as excluding from Church Communion, we Judge it convenient

that all Ministers advise with their Brethren of that Association for their safer proceeding'.

Baxter characterizes the Associated Ministers as 'for number, Parts and Piety the most conscionable part of all that County and some out of some neighbouring Counties that were near us'. But, strange to say, the three denominations for whom the Association was especially designed were not represented. 'In our Association' . . . says Baxter – 'though we made our Terms large enough for all, Episcopal, Presbyterians and Independants, there was not one Presbyterian joyned with us that I know of (for I knew but of one in all the county, Mr *Tho. Hall*)[1] nor one Independent (though two or three honest ones said nothing against us) nor any of the New Prelatical way (*Dr Hammond's*) but three or four moderate Conformists that were for the old Episcopacy; and all the rest were meer Catholicks – Men of no Faction, nor siding with any Party, but owning that which was good in all, so far as they could discern it; and upon a Concord in so much, laying out themselves for the great Ends of their Ministry, the Peoples Edification'.[2]

These 'meer Catholicks,' who formed the bulk of the Worcestershire Association, were, according to Baxter, the sort of men who formed the bulk of the 'godly Ministers and People throughout England'. His words on this point are very noteworthy. 'The greatest Advantage which I found for Concord and Pacification was among a great number of Ministers and People who had addicted themselves to no Sect or Party at all, though the Vulgar called them by the Name of *Presbyterians*. And the truth is, as far as I could discover, this was the case of the greatest number of the Godly Ministers and People throughout *England*. For though Presbytery generally took in *Scotland*, yet it was but a stranger here'.

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[1] King's Norton (1610–65). Mr. Hall was a thorough Presbyterian and joined the classis at Kenilworth. Baxter says that the Presbyterian objection to his movement was that it might 'bring the Presbyterian Government into Contempt or hinder the Execution of it'; but pleads that 'a present forbearance of full Classical Government' may be unavoidable. 'We in this county' e.g. 'did seek for authority from the Parliament many years ago for the establishing of the Presbyterian Government', and could not get it. Meanwhile, are we to forbear 'all administration of the Lord's supper' and all 'exercise of Discipline' as some Ministers actually do, and have done, for many years in unpresbyterated districts? Cannot we agree to do as much as is lawfully possible (*R.B.*, II, p. 167, and 'Explication', p. 31, in *Christian Concord*).

[2] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 148, 97.

Some ministers did not want it because they simply wanted a reformation of the episcopal system; many who were 'young students in the Universities, at the time of the change of Church Government', 'had never well studied the Point on either side'; while most of the ministers were willing enough to concur 'in the Presbyterian way of *practice*' but not in its '*Principles*' – especially 'the *Jus Divinum* of Lay Elders'. They were 'for the moderate Primitive Episcopacy, and for a narrow Congregational or Parochial[1] Extent of ordinary Churches, and for an accommodation of all Parties, in order to Concord, as well as myself. I am sure as soon as I proposed it to them I found most inclined to this way, and therefore I suppose it was their Judgment before. Yea, multitudes whom I had no converse with, I understood to be of this mind; so that these, being no way preengaged, made the work of Concord much more hopeful . . . than I thought it to be when I first attempted it'. Hence his delight when, upon the publication of the first agreement (in July 1653) he heard of Ministers[2] in most counties taking the business into consideration; and many counties, in consequence, beginning to associate, e.g. 'Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Hampshire, Essex, and others'. Cumberland and Westmorland are not mentioned because, by a singular coincidence, these two counties had 'undertaken a work of the like nature' before the Worcestershire agreement came out. This fact was announced to Baxter in a letter of great interest[3] dated Penrith, September 1, 1653, and signed by seven Ministers.[4]

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[1] Note the identical use of Congregational and Parochial.

[2] But the qualifying judgment of an authority on the subject like Dr Shaw should be noted – 'However emphatic Baxter's testimony may be to the contrary, it is certain and positive that a proportion of the clergy, Puritans and Moderates alike, had in those years (1644–47) gone over to a clerical Presbytery'. – *The Church under the Commonwealth*, vol. ii, p. 172.

[3] In this case the people most hostile were local congregationalists. 'They would not so much as read our Proposals and Reasons'.

[4] Ri(chard) Gilpin, Pastor at Graystock.
John Makmillane, Pastor at Odenhall.
Roger Baldwin, Minister of Penrith.
John Billingsley, Minister of Addingham.
Elisha Bourne, Minister at Skelton.
John Jackson, Pastor of Hutton.
Thomas Turner, Preacher of the Gospel.

Baxter's reply, dated October, is still more interesting. It is a poignant expression of his hopes and fears with regard to the new movement.

'We have many helpers in other Works of Piety but too few in this. Indeed, we are following on the Work as being conscious of our duty, but concerning the Success are between hope and fear. Among ourselves in this County, God hath strangely facilitated all and satisfied most of those, that seem faithful in his Work, on the Terms which we have published. We hear also that in many other Counties they are stirred up to Consultations for these Ends; and we perceive that the Excellency and Necessity of Unity, Peace and some Reformation is a little more observed than it hath been heretofore; and that God begins to disgrace Divisions, and to put a zeal for Reconciliation into many of his Ministers. Also we have made some attempts with some Brethren of another County, where are some Men of great Learning and Piety that are of the Episcopal Way; and we found them not only much approving the Work, but forward to promote it with the rest of their Neighbour Ministers. Our godly people, also, through God's great mercy, are almost all very tractable to, yea and rejoice in, the Work. These things give us hope'. But there is another side. We have 'much cause of trouble and fear, both from the backwardness of Pastors and People in the Work'. 'We understand from other parts how heartless some are to such a Work; and how averse those are that are deeply engaged already in Parties. We hear not of those hearty inclinations to Peace in the party whose averseness you mention,[1] as we hoped to have done, when we came so near them as we do; not crossing, that we know of, any of their Principles (though silencing some). They do in some neighbour Counties zealously preach against us, and cry down our way as formal and delusory; making the People believe that we make a Parish and a Church all one, and that to cast them out of the Church is to cast them out of the Parish, and that we take in all that will come, be they never so bad – though we have fully told them that we are taking in none, but discerning who are in, and shall cast out all whom they can prove fit to be cast out. Some Brethren also of sounder Judgments, do stand at a distance, and will not come amongst us, to tell us the Reasons of it.[1] Some in other Counties, that are zealous to promote the Work, do meet with so much opposition, tergiversation, and discouragement, that we hear it to be like to hinder it with them. Also we find not that love and peaceable inclination in the exasperated part of the Episcopal Brethren, as might be expected from the Sons of Peace. But the greatest discouragement with us is from our People: for though, through the Mercy of God, divers of us have encouragement, yet in most places the Multitude hold off, and will not own us. And though God so ordered it, that the worst do generally keep off themselves, and few but Men seeming to fear God do joyn with us, yet some few of the most zealous of our People, in some places, do hold off, as disliking the broadness of our way. We find it not only in Doctrinals but Practicals, that most are for the Extreeams and the mean pleaseth few, but is censured of both'. . . . 'Indeed we see such exceeding differences in Mens Apprehensions, and such addictedness to their Party in too many, and such a loathness in others to displease the People, or weaken their own interest in them, and hazard part of their maintenance that comes from them, that we do expect the Work should go heavily on; and if it prove otherwise, we shall ascribe it to the meer good pleasure of God and his extraordinary blessing: for no doubt but all the force will be raised against it, that the interest of Satan in the ungodly, the heretical Dividers, the dark imperfect Saints, can procure'.

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[1] I.e. the Congregational Brethren.

But the work is its own reward. 'Indeed, we have experience of much sweetness in the Work! our very Thoughts and Speeches and Consultations of Peace are sweet. That our minds should be hereby occasioned to dwell so much on such a blessed Subject – we find a great advantage to our own Souls; it much composeth and calmeth our Minds, and killeth the contrary corruptions, and disposeth us to love and tenderness to our Brethren. So that were we sure to have no other success, we have a plentiful Reward. As our studies of Heaven, and preaching of it to our People, occasioneth such foretasts that are worth our labour a thousandfold, so do the studies and attempts for Peace'. 'Truly it is sweeter treating with God than with Men. Yet both must be done. And as we desire to resist all Temptations to Despondency, so we hope that the Lord will enable you to break over discouraging Oppositions, with such fixed victorious Resolution as becomes Men that are engaged in so sweet a Work and honoured to be Leaders under so faithful, competent and victorious a General' (*R.B.*, II, pp. 164, 5).

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[1] 'If Episcopacy, Presbytery, or Independency, etc., be indeed the way of God, there is no way in the world so likely to set it up as the meeting and loving Association of the Pastors, where all things may be gently and amicably debated'. – ('Explication', in *Christian Concord*, p. 106).

For some years his hopes were in the ascendant, and apparently with good reason. For besides the Counties already mentioned Associations were organized in Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Devon, Herefordshire (perhaps), Norfolk, Nottingham, and Shropshire. North Wales (particularly Flint), also took the matter up, under the inspiring leadership of Philip Henry.[1] No less, or even more, gratifying was it to receive by the hand of Colonel Bridges a letter in July 1655 from Dublin signed by 'Sam Winter' and others – 'in the name of the associated Churches of Christ in Ireland', the Churches concerned being Independent and moderate Presbyterian.[2] Baxter felt greatly encouraged. 'Blessed be God that beginneth mightily to awaken the hearts of his servants' to this duty of peace. His whole soul was in the business. He spared no pains and turned every stone to further it. Thus, although, so far, avowed Episcopalians had held aloof, he gladly acted on the suggestion of his friend Rev Richard Vine that he should open a correspondence with Dr Brownrigg, the sequestered

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[1] See Shaw – *Church under the Commonwealth* – vol. ii, pp. 440–56 for full list and available particulars.

[2] *R.B.*, II, pp. 169–72. Samuel Winter was Provost of Trinity College, Dublin and Pastor of St Nicholas Church. In 1656 he was transferred to Christ Church Cathedral and there, in the East end of its North side, his congregation met (in 1659) 'because destitute of other convenient place of meeting'. See *The Puritans in Ireland* (1647–61), p. 34, by Rev St John Seymour, B.D. (1921). Cp. for Winter, pp. 27, 28, 32, 36, 37, 38.

The other signatories were Claudius Gilbert, Pastor of Limerick; Edward Reynolds, Pastor of Kilmallock; J. Warren, Minister; Will Markham, layman; Thomas Osmonton (or Osmington), Minister at New Ross. A second letter of January 16, 1656, was signed by Winter and his elders (four) only. The Association was small and Mr Seymour thinks it was not a success (*id.*, p. 160).

Bishop of Exeter, as a man of great influence, and reputed to be of 'moderate principles' and Catholic temper (*R.B.*, I, pp. 172–8).

By him he dreamed a vain dream of persuading even some high Episcopalians to see the feasibility of concord and to desire it. On the other hand, he could perceive no good reason why the Independents as a body should not comply with his terms; and, to this end, expounded them in persuasive detail to Rev Philip Nye whom he understood to be 'a very great power' among them (*ibid.*, pp. 188–93). Nay, notwithstanding all he had written against the Anabaptists, he conceived ways and means of Association even with *them*; and stated his views with such 'sweet reasonableness' as inclined not a few leading Baptists to take him seriously (*ibid.*, pp. 180–8; also *ibid.*, Appendix iv., pp. 89, 94, 95).

But all was frustrated by the rush of events. Cromwell's death meant the removal of a dam which had held up a devouring flood. After him the extremists, whom even his strong hand could hardly restrain, had it all their own way; and their way, running as it did in the same direction as the popular current – though they might not know it – made straight for the King's return. Then the rest of the extremists – Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist – found themselves overwhelmed by those extremist Churchmen of the high Prelatical type whose tenets Baxter had always felt to be the chief obstacle in his path. At one time, perhaps, they had seemed too weak numerically to be formidable. If the other parties could have laid aside their differences they might (he thought) have been reduced to impotence. But the parties refused to unite. Each held fanatically to its own particular interest, and so when the common foe sprang up around them as an exceeding great army the rest were at its mercey. Baxter's later reflections on such wicked folly (as he deemed it) record the burial of his dearest hopes:

'The poor Church of Christ, the sober, sound religious Part, are like Christ that was crucified between two Malefactors. The prophane and formal Persecutors on one hand, and the Fanatick dividing Sectary on the other hand, have in all Ages been grinding the spiritual Seed, as the Corn is ground between the Millstones. And though their Sins have ruined themselves and us, and silenced so many hundred Ministers, and scattered the Flocks and made us the Hatred and Scorn of the ungodly World, and a by Word and Desolation in the Earth; yet there are few of them that lament their Sin, but justify themselves and their Misdoings, and the *penitent Malefactor* is yet unknown to us. And seeing Posterity must know what they have done, to the Shame of our Land, and of our sacred Profession, let them know this much more, also, to their own Shame, that all the Calamities which have befallen us by our Divisions were long foreseen by seeing Men, and they were told and warned of it, year after year. They were told that a House divided against itself could not stand, and told that it would bring them to the Halter and to Shame, and turn a hopeful Reformation into a Scorn, and make the Land of their Nativity a Place of Calamity and Woe; and all this Warning signified nothing to them; but their Ducktile Professors blindly followed a few self-conceited Teachers to this Misery; and no warning or means could ever stop them' (*R.B.*, I, p. 103, written about 1664).

NOTE

The 'Honest Ministers of the County' who 'associated' are thus described – 'Their Preaching was powerful and sober; their Spirits peaceable and meek, disowning the Treasons and Iniquities of the times as well as we; they were wholly addicted to the winning of Souls; self-denying, and of most blameless Lives; Evil spoken of by no Sober Men, but greatly beloved by their own people and all that knew them; adhering to no Faction, neither Episcopal, Presbyterian or Independent, as to Parties, but desiring Union and loving that which is good in all.'

'Such' (it is added) 'were

Mr Andrew Trisham,* Minister of Bridgnorth;
*Mr Thomas Baldwin (senr.), Minister of Chaddesley;
Mr Thomas Baldwin (junr.), Minister of Clent;
Mr Joseph Baker, Minister in Worcester;
*Mr Henry Oasland, Minister of Bewdley;
*Mr William Spicer, Minister of Stone;
*Mr Richard Serjeant, last Minister of Stone;
Mr Wilsby of Wornborne;
Mr Reignolds of Wolverhampton;
Mr Joseph Rocke of Rowley;

Mr Richard Wolley* of Sallwarp;
Mr Giles Wolley;
Mr Humphrey Waldern of Broome;
Mr Edward Bourchier of Church-hill;
Mr Ambrose Sparry of Martley;
Mr William Kimberley of Ridmarley;
Mr Benj(amin) Baxter of Upton-upon-Severn;
Mr Dowley of Stoke;
Mr Stephen Baxter;
Mr Thomas Bromwick of Kemsey;
Mr J. Nott of Sheriff-hales, and many others;

to whom I may adjoyn Mr John Spilsbury and Mr Juice one of Bromsgrove and the other of Worcester – Independents and very honest sober and moderate men' (*R.B.*, I, p. 90).

Dr Shaw's list (*u.s.*, vol. ii, p. 455) includes all the above and adds the following:

*John Boraston of Ribsford, nr Bewdley.
Richard Eades, of Beckford, Gloucester.
Charles Nott of Shelsey.
James Warwick of Henley Castle.
Thomas Evans of Welland.
*Thomas Wright of Hartlebury.
John Hill of Clifton-upon-Thame.
John Freeston, Hampton Lovet.
Andrew Trusteram, Clent.
Thomas Franke, Nanton-Beachamp.
John Taylor, Dudley.
Sam Bowater, Astley.
Will Cole, Priton.
Tho(mas) Francis, Doderhill.
Thomas Jackman, Barrough.
Will Durham, Fredington.
*Thos. Easton, Batesford, Gloucester.
*Giles Collier, Blockley.
*George Hopkins, Evesham.
*Thomas Mathews, Evesham.
*John Dalphine, Honiborne.
*Joseph Treble (Trebell), Church Lench.
*Will Willes, Littleton.
Rich. Beeston, Breedon.
Rich. Frucher, City of Worcester.
Joseph Willmot, Pershore.

Fra(nk) Hyatt, Eckington.
Robert Browne, White Lady, Aston.
Gervice Bryan, old Swinford & Sturbridge.
John Dedicote, Abbotesley.
Dr Thomas Good (Rector of Cowley, Salop).
Dr Thomas Warmestry.
*Richard Baxter, Kidderminster (first in the list).

If we may assume no great change since 1524 when there were 112 Parishes in the Six Deaneries of the County and Diocese,[1] it would appear that less than half the Parishes were represented in the Association at its strongest.

In the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. vii, ff. 213^{ab}, 214^{ab}, there is the original draft of a form which would appear to have been sent out to the Churches of the County. It runs: 'Profession of the Church of Christ at —— in cheerful conjunction with many other neighbour Churches who in order to further reformation and exercise of Christs discipline have all agreed in the same Profession'. There follows the Profession itself with Baxter's Preface, as afterwards printed in *Christian Concord.* It consists of the Apostles' creed (with Baxter's Paraphrase) and the declaration: –

'I do heartily take this one God, for my only God and my Chief Good, and this Jesus Christ for my only Lord-Redeemer and Saviour, and this Holy Ghost for my Sanctifier: and the Doctrine by him Revealed and Sealed by his Miracles, and now contained in the Holy Scriptures, I do take for the Law of God and the Rule of my Faith and Life: and, Repenting unfeignedly of my sins, I do Resolve through the Grace of God sincerely to obey him, both in Holiness to God and righteousness to Men, and in speciall Love to the Saints, and Communion with them, against all the Temptations of the Devil, the World and my own Flesh; and this to the Death'.

When printed, every statement of this Declaration was backed up by numerous texts of Scripture, but these are not in the first draft. Both the written and printed drafts, however, have the form of admission to the Church, immediately after the Profession of Faith: viz. – 'I do consent to be a Member of the particular Church at —— whereof —— Teacher and Overseer, and to submit to —— Teaching and Ministeriall Guidance and Oversight, according to God's Word, and to hold Communion with that Church in the publick worshipping of God, and to submit to the Brotherly admonition of fellow-members, that so we may be built up in knowledge, and Holiness, and may the better maintain our Obedience to Christ, and the Welfare of this Society and hereby may the more Please and Glorifie God'. Every phrase of this, also, is referred to scripture for sanction in the printed form; but not in the written. Finally, the whole is signed by the sixteen ministers marked * in the above list and these four: Samuel Smith of Kinver, Thomas Banton of Hightington, William Bridges of Hardington, and Francis Reynolds of Bishampton. We have here the 20 pioneers; and since the just named four are absent from the later lists, it may be a fair inference that they repented of their first step and drew back. It is curious to note that the signatures are mostly in Latin – e.g. Aegidius Collier Ecclesiæ Blockliensis Pastor.

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[1] *Victoria History of Worcestershire*, vol. iii, p. 890. Mr. G. Willis Bund, a safe authority on the point, writes (in kind answer to my enquiry): 'I have no reason to doubt, and no evidence is at present known to me on which to base a doubt, that it' (112 Parishes) 'is the number in 1653'.

As to the adherence of Dr Thomas Good and Dr Thomas Warmestry I doubt if it went beyond the general, and not very sincere, approval which they expressed at the close of their conference with Baxter and others at Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, on September 20, 1653 (*R.B.*, II, p. 149). After a safe voyage across the interregnum, Good lived to be Master of Balliol College, Oxford (1672) and to write a book in which he said 'that all the Nonconformists' (without exception) had their hands stained with the Royal blood (*R.B.*, III, p. 150) while Warmestry lived – as Dean of Worcester – to slander Baxter from his old pulpit; and to affirm that 'it is a lesser sin for a man to kill his Father than to refrain from coming to the Divine Service established in the Church of England'. 'The one was the killing of a particular person, the other made a breach in the mystical body of Christ'.

I found this written on the title-page of 'Magna Charta discovered between a Poor Man and his wife' – in a volume of Tracts in the Bodleian Library (Pamphlets 119). He had turned his back completely on the 'Thomas Warmstry' – 'one of the clerks of the Diocese of Worcester' – who delivered 'a convocation speech against Images, Altars, the new Canons and the Oath, etc.' (1641) 22pp. Tracts (T. W. E. No. 3) Rylands Library.

12

SIR RALPH CLARE

NOT the least of the few drawbacks encountered by Baxter in his second period was Sir Ralph Clare – owner and occupant of Caldwell Hall. Yet he seems to have been a very reputable gentleman – 'an old man' (says Baxter) 'of great Courtship and Civility'; 'very temperate as to Dyet, apparel and Sports'; one who seldom swore 'any lowder than By his Troth'; and withal, studiously respectful to Baxter personally. They did not hold aloof from each other, but 'conversed together with Love and Familiarity'. How came it, then, that, according to Baxter he 'did more to hinder my greater successes than a multitude of others could have done'? Simply because he was, and (to his credit) remained, a strict Episcopalian. Baxter, it should be noted, does not blame him for this in itself. He honoured him for his conscientiousness. But he points out that 'his coming but once to Church on the Lord's Days, and his Abstaining from the Sacrament etc.', 'did cause a great part of the Parish to follow him and do the like'. 'And yet' (adds Baxter, with his usual fairness) 'Civility, and yielding much beyond others of his Party[1] (sending his Family to be Catechized and personally Instructed) did sway with the worst almost, among us, to do the like'. His social influence, indeed, could not fail to be paramount with many. For he was a lord of the Manor and High steward of the Borough[2] and an Aristocrat, connected by descent with families like the D'Abitots of Croome and the Blounts. Nor was his influence diminished, but rather increased, by the fact that he did not disguise his devotion to the King.[3] Royalism was always the popular cause even in Kidderminster, though its formula ran 'for King and the Parliament'.

So we can understand how the silent, but unconcealed, antagonism, in Church-matters, of such a man meant much to

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[1] His party was that of Dr Hammond, leader of the Laudians and of Sir John Packington in whose house at Westwood (after 1649) Dr Hammond lived till his death (1660).

[2] In the Charter of 1636 his manorial rights (along with those of Lord Abergavenny) are expressly reserved and he is nominated High Steward for life.

[3] He was conspicuous among the defenders of Worcester in the siege of 1646.

Baxter. It amounted to a daily challenge of his position. And there were times when the antagonism voiced itself. Thus, on one occasion, or on more than one, Sir Ralph demanded that the Lord's supper should be given to 'him kneeling on a distinct Day and not with those that received it sitting'. The date of this seems to have been about January, 1655–6,[1] and the effect of it, says Baxter, was to produce 'all the Disturbance I had in my own Parish'. Was the demand a display of insolence? Baxter did not so take it. He took it rather as a sort of test case. Some months before – April 20, 1655 – Sir Ralph had handed to him a group of 'Queries and Scruples of Conscience', purporting to come from a 'wounded soul' who spoke for many others; and addressed himself to the Kidderminster Pastor as one 'much famed abroad and had in a reverend esteem for Piety of Life as for his Learning, Moderation, and desiring the Peace of the Church'. Sir Ralph had been chosen to present the paper because of his known 'Influence and Power' with Baxter; and his 'old acquaintance', at the 'one-glorious Court of England', with the questioners. He signs himself 'Theophilus Church' – a feigned name indicative of his purpose, which, evidently, was to make out such a plea for the late Ecclesiastical Order of things as might confound even Baxter. And among the points raised was this – whether 'the usage of the Cross in Baptism and the humble posture of kneeling at the receiving of the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper' were not obligatory until 'abrogated' by the Powers which framed the Canons of 1562 and 1640? No, answered Baxter (May 14): 'Kneeling at the Sacrament is a Novelty introduced many hundred years after Christ, and contrary to such Canons and Customs of the Church, to which for Antiquity and Universality you owe much more respect than to the Canons of the late Bishops in *England*'.[2] It was a sign, therefore, of discontent with this answer; and of a desire, perhaps, to assert a supposed legal right, when Sir Ralph came forward ten months later and claimed to communicate 'kneeling'. Nor need the fact that he asked for a 'distinct day' imply more than a resolve to draw public attention to his claim. Baxter replied in a letter [3] of uncompromising

[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 162. [2] *Ibid.*, II, p. 157. [3] *Ibid.*, II, pp. 157–162.

plainness. A letter well worth attention alike for its contents and its tone.

He wrote it after 'consultation with others and his own conscience'; and it does much more than decline to yield. It also explains, in the frankest manner, the reasons for declining; the conditions under which the action required of him *might* possibly be done by way of concession to a 'weak brother'; and the relations in which he stands to those not professedly members of his charge, including Sir Ralph himself.

(1) As to his reasons, he is so far from admitting any force in the argument for kneeling drawn from ancient practice and the canons of the Church that, on the contrary, he asserts the example of 'Christ and his Apostles and all his Churches for many hundred years' for sitting. Hence he takes 'it to be intolerable arrogancy and unmannerliness (to speak easily) to call that unreverence and sawciness (as many do) which Christ and the Apostles and all the Church so long used with one consent. He better knew what pleaseth him best than we do'.

Further, there is something in the very nature of the sacrament which points to sitting rather than kneeling as the more suitable attitude. For, 'the Gospel is Glad Tidings; the Effects of it are Faith and Peace and Joy; the Benefits are to make us one with Christ, and to be his Spouse and Members; the work of it is the Joyful Commemmoration of these Benefits and living in Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost; and the Sacramental Signs are such as suit the Benefits and Duties. If therefore, Christ have called us by his Example, and the Example of all his Church to sit with him at his Table to represent our Union, Communion and Joyful redeemed State, and our everlasting sitting with him at his Table in his Kingdom, it as little beseems us to reject this Mercy and Duty, because of our Unworthiness as to be our own Lawgivers'.

(2) 'Thus Sir, I have first given you my Reasons about the Gesture itself. And of putting it into each Person's hands, I have thus much more to say:

(i.) I know nothing to oblige me to it.
(ii.) Christ himself did otherwise, as appeareth in Matthew xxvi. 26, 27: for *take ye*, *eat ye*, *drink ye*

all of it, doth shew that it was given to them all in general, and not to each man singly.

(iii.) And in this also Antiquity is on my side, the contrary being much later. More Reasons I have that I shall not here trouble you with'.

But, on the other hand, 'having thus told you my thoughts of the Matters in doubt, I shall next tell you my purpose as to your Motion.

(i.) I did never hitherto, to my remembrance, refuse to give the Sacrament to anyone, meerly because they would not take it Sitting or Standing; nor did ever forbid or repel any on that account; nor ever mean to do . . .

(ii.) If they further expect that I should put it into each Man's hands individually, I may well expect the liberty of guiding my own Actions, according to my own Conscience, if I may not guide theirs . . : let us be equal and let me have my liberty, as I am willing to let them have theirs . . .

(iii.) Yet if any of my Pastoral Charge . . . profess that they think it a Sin against God for them to Receive the Sacrament unless it be put into their hands Kneeling . . . I do purpose to condescend to their Weakness . . . though I know Inconveniences will follow which they and not I, are guilty of . . .

(iv.) But then these Persons must not expect that I should never give them my Judgment and Reasons against their Opinion: for that were to cease teaching them the Truth, as well as to yield to their Errors'.

(v.) And I shall expect that at the first Receiving, they will openly profess that they take not the Bread for the Substantial Body of Christ nor Worship the Bread'.

All this, however, applied only to those who were confessedly under his Pastoral Charge. As to others, or those of the Parish who refused to live under 'just Discipline', his final word is 'I dare not (I profess seriously I dare not) ordinarily at least, give the Sacrament' to them, either kneeling or standing. When we remember that Sir Ralph was certainly not a member of his charge in the sense defined by Baxter, this means that he had to refuse Sir Ralph the sacrament ordinarily. 'I will be a Pastor to none that will not be under Discipline: that were to be a half Pastor, and indulge Men in an unruliness and contempt of the Ordinance of Christ. If I take more on me than is just or necessary, I will gladly hear of it and recant'. 'Sir, pardon the Plainness, and accept the true account of my Thoughts'. I question if Sir Ralph ever pardoned the Plainness. It did not ruffle his courteous bearing, but it rankled.

The months immediately following Oliver Cromwell's death issued in a great tumult of contending parties. 'The Anabaptists grew insolent in *England* and *Ireland*; and joining with their brethren in the Army, were everywhere put in Power; and those of them that before lived in some seeming Friendliness near me at *Bewdley* began now to shew that they remembered all their former Provocations (by my public Disputation with Mr *Tombes* and writing against them, and hindering their increase in those parts). And though they were not much above twenty (Men and Women) near us, they talked as if they had been Lords of the World'. 'The People then were so apprehensive of approaching Misery and Confusion while the Fanaticks were Lords and *Vane* ruled in the State and *Lambert* in the Army, and Fifth Monarchy men (as they called the Millenaries) and Seekers and Anabaptists were their chief Strength, that the King's old Party (called then the Cavaliers) and the Parliament Party (called the Presbyterians) did secretly combine in many parts of the Land to rise all at once and suppress these insolent Usurpers and bring in the King; Sir Ralph Clare . . . acquainted me with the intended Rising – the Issue of which was that the Cavaliers failing (except a few at Salisbury who were suddenly disperst or taken [1]) Sir *George Booth* and Sir *Tho. Middleton*, two old commanders for the Parliament, drew together an Army of about 5000 Men, and took *Chester*; and, there being no other to divert him, *Lambert* came against them, and, some Independents and Anabaptists of the County joining with him, his souldiers quickly routed them[1] all, and Sir *George Booth* was afterwards taken and imprisoned.'[2]

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[1] August 1, 1659, also 'in Kent, Surrey, Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire . . .' (*Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv, p. 540).

Sir Ralph, in fact, was deep in the intrigues which preceded, and prepared for, the Restoration; and, as regards his main object, he knew Baxter was in sympathy with him. Through letters received by Dr Hammond (then at Westwood, only seven miles off) from Dr Morley who was with the King in Holland, Sir Ralph could tell Baxter just what the Royalists were doing or intending. Through the same means, also, he learnt how to answer Baxter when the latter, foreseeing the inevitable drift towards a return of the King and of Episcopal rule, urged the supreme expediency of 'some Agreement' between the so-called, 'Presbyterians' and 'the Episcopal Men'. Only in this way, said Baxter, could they expect to be secure against the fanatics. But, judging by the temper of 'the Episcopal men' of Dr Hammond's party, an agreement seemed impossible. For that party, under the Doctor's lead, had grown so stiff and high in its claims as to deny 'the very being of the Reformed Churches and Ministry'. It might well be feared, therefore, that 'Persecution and the Ruine of the Ministry and Churches' would swiftly follow, 'if Prelacie got up again'.

Baxter and the Squire had much talk on this point; and the latter may be excused if he felt some secret exultation at the thought that, after all, his time was coming. But, for the present, he used (perhaps sincerely) the language of reassurance. There was no reason, he said, to fear any retaliatory measures from the Bishops. Nay, the intended scheme of Episcopacy would shut out its *Prelatical* form altogether. 'Any Episcopacy, how low soever would serve the turn and be accepted.' There were to be 'no Lord Bishops,' no 'large Dioceses,' no 'great Revenues', no 'persecuting Power'. There was to be nothing beyond 'the Essentials of Episcopacy'. For the rest, 'no godly able Minister should be displaced, much less silenced', no unworthy men any more set up, 'no Thoughts of Revenge for any thing past' be indulged. All should 'be equal'. So Sir Ralph 'confidently affirmed' on the strength of what Dr Hammond (1605–60) had heard from Dr Morley (1597–1684) and the King. Baxter, however, was not satisfied. For he foresaw that the last word would lie not with the King but with the men at home whom the principles, rather than the spirit, of Dr Hammond seemed to render irreconcileable. Only if these could be restrained by his authority was there some hope. Baxter, therefore, set himself to win over Dr Hammond. He drew up a few Proposals (fourteen) for a common basis of Church-government among all good Christians of sober mind; and Sir Ralph took them to Westwood. The answer which he 'shortly brought back' was a disappointment. 'For' – says he – 'Dr Hammond cast all the Alterations or Abatements upon the King and Parliament, when as the thing that I desired of him was but to promise his best endeavours to accomplish it, by persuading both the Clergy and the Civil Governors to do their Parts'. In other words, he wanted a man of his commanding influence to take a public stand at once for 'Terms of Peace'; and instead, the Doctor decided to let the parties fight it out. Surely an ominous fact. Nevertheless, Baxter felt his death, which occurred 'just when the King came in',[1] as 'a very great loss: for his Piety and Wisdom would sure have hindred much of the Violence which after followed'.[2]

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[1] On August 23 at Winnington Bridge, near Northwich.

[2] *R.B.*, II., pp. 206–7.

The Restoration restored Mr Dance to his living – as in the case of hundreds more of the Sequestered Clergy; and Baxter found himself a Preacher at large. 'I was willing' – he says – 'to take the Lecture which by his Bond was secured to me, and was still my Right; or, if that were denied me, I would be his Curate. . . .'

At first, there seemed to be no difficulty. On the contrary, there seemed to be a purpose to do more than he asked – viz. to make him Vicar. This was the Lord Chancellor Hyde's own proposal who, 'to make the business certain', was willing to engage himself 'for a valuable stipend to Mr Dance' to be paid by his Steward. Moreover, the King was quoted as favourable to the arrangement: he had so very good an opinion of Mr Baxter! But somehow it could not be managed'; and so Mr Dance 'must keep his place'. What was the hindrance? It lay (says Baxter) chiefly with Sir Ralph Clare. 'The Ruler of the Vicar, and all the Business there' (at Kidderminster) 'was Sir *Ralph Clare*, an old man, and an old Courtier, who carried it towards me all the time I was there with great Civility and Respect, and sent me a Purse of Money when I went away (but I refused it). But his Zeal against all that scrupled Ceremonies or that would not preach for Prelacy and Conformity etc., was so much greater than his Respects to me that he was the principal Cause of my Removal (though he has not owned it to this Day)[1]: I suppose he thought that when I was far enough off, he could so far rule the Town as to reduce the People to his way'. He was 'my Applauder, but Remover.' It was he, along with his eager abettor Sir John Packington, who made the new Bishop of Worcester, Dr Morley,[2] 'believe that my Interest was so great, and I could do so much with Ministers and People in that Country' (county?) 'that unless I would bind myself to promote their cause and Party, I was not fit to be there'.

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[1] He died April 25, 1660, the day that the Parliament voted for the King's return.

[2] Baxter's 'Proposals' with Hammond's 'answer' and the former's 'Reply' are printed in *R.B.*, II, pp. 208–14.

Thus the Bishop (not against the grain) was won over; and he, in turn, 'being greatest of any Man with the Lord Chancellor' won *him* over (also not much against the grain). But, for some time, the farce was kept up. The Chancellor even went the length of writing ('upon his own offer') a letter of remonstrance to Sir Ralph which Baxter 'took a Copy of' before sending it away – as, at his request, it was given him 'unsealed'. It is too curious to omit.[3]

'TO MY NOBLE FRIEND SIR RALPH CLARE, THESE

'SIR, I am a little out of Countenance, that after the discovery of such a desire in his Majesty that Mr Baxter should be settled at Kidderminster, as he was heretofore, and my promise to you – by the King's Direction – that Mr Dance should very punctually receive a Recompence by way of a Rent, upon his or your Bills charged here upon my Steward, Mr Baxter hath yet no fruit of this his Majesty's good intention towards him: so that

[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 298, written about 1665.

[2] Consecrated on October 28, 1660.

[3] There is no date, but it was probably a sequel to Baxter's letter of November 1st to the Chancellor (see *infra*, p. 196).

he hath too much reason to believe that he is not so frankly dealt with in this particular as he deserves to be. I do again tell you that it will be very acceptable to the King, if you can persuade Mr Dance to surrender that Charge to Mr Baxter; and in the mean time, and till he is preferred to as profitable an Imployment, whatever Agreement you shall make with him for an Annual Rent, it shall be paid Quarterly upon a Bill from you, charged upon my Steward Mr Clutterbucke; and for the exact performance of this you may securely pawn your full Credit. I do most earnestly intreat you that you will with all speed inform me what we may depend upon in this particular, that we may not keep Mr Baxter in suspense, who hath deserved very well from his Majesty, and of whom his Majesty has a very good Opinion, and I hope you will not be the less desirous to Comply with him for the particular Recommendations of, Sir,

'Your very affectionate Servant

'EDW. HYDE.'

Could 'anything' – asks Baxter – 'be more serious and cordial and obliging'? Yet finally it came to this – 'Sir Ralph Clare did freely tell me that if I would conform to the Orders and Ceremonies of the Church and preach Conformity to the People, and labour to set them right, there was no Man in England so fit to be there: for no man could more effectually do it; but if I would not, there was no Man so unfit for the place; for no Man could more hinder it' (*R.B.*, II, p. 299).

Of course, his refusal to such an ultimatum was certain and foreseen. Sir Ralph knew his man and that his own hour of triumph had come. Two incidents prior to this last word bring the two men into a clear and dramatic light. The scene of the first was 'the Bishop's Chamber' at Worcester. Sir Ralph had been challenged by Baxter to tell him to his face what he had against him; and Sir Ralph brought up first, his old grievance of having been refused the 'Sacrament Kneeling' – to which Baxter answered in substantially the way already related.[1] Next, he asserted that Baxter was not really popular. 'There was not past Six hundred that were for me and the rest were rather for the Vicar' – out of 1800 communicants.[1] In support of this assertion he had one witness – 'a Stranger newly come, one *Ganderton*, an Attorney, Steward to the Lord *Abergeveny* (a Papist)'. On the other hand, says Baxter, 'I craved of the Bishop that I might send by the next Post to know their Minds, and if that were so, I would take it for a favour to be kept from thence. When the People heard this at *Kidderminster*, in a day's time they gathered the hands of 1600 of the 1800 Communicants, and the rest were such as were from home; and within four or five days I happened to find Sir *Ralph Clare* with the Bishop again, and shewed him the hands of 1600 Communicants, with an offer of more, if they might have time, all very earnest for my Return. Sir *Ralph* was silenced as to that point; but he and the Bishop appeared so much the more against my Return'.

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[1] Except for the statement that he had 'under' his own hand in writing 'invited him to the Sacrament and offered it him kneeling'. This seems strange, but it is qualified by the condition that Sir Ralph and his Party must take it at the same time as the rest.

The scene of the second incident – a little later – is not stated, but may have been the same place, or at Caldwell Hall. Sir Ralph had caused the people of the Town to be searched for Arms and if any had a Sword it was taken from them. There was much talk of plots after Venner's mad outbreak in January 1661); and men of Sir Ralph's colour were, or pretended to be, in a state of alarm. 'Meeting him after with the Bishop' – says Baxter – 'I desired him to tell us why his Neighbours were so used, as if he would have made the World believe that they were Seditious, or Rebels, or dangerous Persons that should be used as enemies to the King. He answered me, That it was because thay would not bring out their Arms when they were commanded, but said they had none, wheras they had Arms upon every occasion to appear with, on the behalf of *Cromwell*. This great disingenuity of so ancient a Gentleman, towards his Neighbours whom he pretended kindness to, made me brake forth into some more than ordinary freedom of reproof; and I answered him, That we have thought our Condition hard in that by Strangers that know us not, we should be ordinarily traduced and misrepresented; but this was most sad and marvellous, that a Gentleman so Civil, should before the Bishop speak such words against a Corporation, which he knew I was able to confute, and are so contrary to truth! I asked him whether he did not know that I publicly and privately spake against the Usurpers, and declared them to be Rebels, and whether he took not the People to be of my mind; and whether I and they had not hazarded our Liberty by refusing the Engagement against the King and House of Lords, when *he*[1] and others of his mind had taken it? He contended that *I* had been against *Cromwell*, but *They* had always on every occasion appeared in Arms for him. I told him that he struck me with admiration' (i.e. astonishment) 'that it should be possible for him to live in the Town and yet believe what he said to be true; or yet to speak it in our hearing, if he knew it to be untrue. And I professed, that having lived there Sixteen[2] years since the Wars, I never knew that they once appeared in Arms for *Cromwell* or any Usurpers; and challenged him upon his word to name one time. I could not get him to name any time till I had urged him to the utmost; and then he instanced in the time when the *Scots* Army fled from *Worcester*. I challenged him to name one man of them that was at *Worcester* Fight, or bare Arms there, or at any time for the Usurpers; and when he could name none, I told him that all that was done to my knowledge in sixteen years of that kind, was but this, that when the *Scots* fled from *Worcester*, as all the Country (County?) sought in covetousness to catch some of them, for their Horses, *so* two idle Rogues of *Kedderminster* – that never communicated with me any more than he did – had drawn two or three of their Neighbours with them in the Night as the *Scots* fled, to catch their Horses; and I never heard of three that they catcht. And I appealed to the Bishop and his Conscience, whether he that, being urged, could name no more than this – did ingenuously Accuse the Corporation, Magistrates and People, to have appeared on all Occasion in Arms for *Cromwell*? And when they had no more to say, I told them, by this we saw what measures to expect from *Strangers* of his mind, when he that is our neighbour, and noted for eminent Civility, never sticketh to speak such things even of a People among whom he hath still lived'[1]

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[1] There were some 1,800 who came to Communion now and then; but there were some 600 ordinary and regular communicants: ecclesiola in ecclesia. Sir Ralph asserted that THESE ONLY were for Baxter.

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[1] This should be noted.

[2] Actually thirteen from 1647; but he would seem to be reckoning *all* his time since the war began.

With this indignant protest Baxter parted from Sir Ralph possibly for the last time: for Baxter, in a few weeks at most returned to London and is not known ever again to have revisited Kidderminster. The sturdy old knight lived nearly another ten years and died (within a few months of Mr Dance) on April 21, 1670 – a bachelor of 84. His grave and monument are in the south aisle of the Parish Church. A courtier in his youth, he is said to have resumed the rôle for which he was so well fitted, and to have been welcomed by the King with special marks of respect. 'Any Worcestershire gentleman' – wrote Townshend ('Diary', July 5, 1660) – 'hath great civil admittance to his Majesty's presence, but, above all, Sir Ralph Clare, who hath conference sometimes two hours together'.

Most of his time, however, would be spent at Caldwell; and he certainly found that the ghost of Baxter's influence continued to vex his claim to an undisputed authority.

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[1] *R.B.*, II, pp. 300–301.

13

IN LONDON (1660–61)

§ 1

BAXTER tells us he was 'called up to London' (*R.B.*, I, p. 106) in April 1660 and we should like to know why or by whom; but, according to the printed text of his narrative (*ibid.* p. 215) there is no light on this point. It so happens, however, that the MS. as it left his hands is still extant'[1]; and, by comparison, we see that the Editor has thought fit, just here, to make some 'judicious' omissions. If we restore these, the situation becomes clear.

'For myself I had received many letters[2] full of extraordinary kindness from the Earle of Lauderdaile, then prisoner in Windsor Castle and he had sent to me purposely, with the first, Mr James Sharpe, now Archbishop of St Andrews. And, after that, his profession of respect and kindness, and great condescensions and judicious letters, were all so extraordinary as much obliged me to hearken to his judgment. His real affection to the King was very great, and the character he gave of him was very high and honourable, and when the fanaticks gave out that my judgment was, that our obligations to R. Cromwell were not dissolved, nor could be, till another Parliament, or his full renunciation, did it, he sent me word[3] that he would presently' (i.e. immediately) 'take a journey to visit me, and satisfie me (as soon as he was out of prison, for the restored Parliament presently set him free). Therefore, *to prevent his trouble and for other reasons*,[4] I found myself obliged to goe to London where he was pleased to come to me[5] with the renewed expressions of extraordinary kindness w^ch^ he hath hitherto continued, as did, also, S^r^ William Morrice (now Secretary of State)'.[6]

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[1] Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iii, ff. p. 103.

[2] Eleven of these are in the Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. iv, f. 104^{ab} and have been transcribed by the present writer. See *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. vii, No. 1, 1922.

[3] From Windsor.

[4] Italics mine.

[5] I came to London April 13 (1660). (He came to me) April 14 (margin).

[6] (1602–76) Morice was related, through his wife, to General Monck, whose chief agent he was in negotiating with the Royalists. Charles knighted him on

So, the primary reason for Baxter's sudden departure from Kidderminster – a departure which much surprised some of his friends, including Margaret Charlton – was a desire to save the Earl of Lauderdale the trouble of coming down to him, as he proposed. He reached London on the 13th and on the very next day the Earl sought him out at his lodging – a promptitude of attention which implies not only the Earl's respect but also a clear understanding of Baxter's movements. The latter found himself, in fact, a personage of considerable importance. Lauderdale, acting in close touch with the King, regarded the winning over of the Presbyterians, or the sober religious party, as absolutely necessary to the success of his schemes, and looked upon Baxter as, unquestionably, their most influential leader. To win him was to win the game. And he won him. Having dispersed his scruples about the legality of a restoration, he went on to quiet his doubts of its morality. 'Presently after my coming to London the Earl of Lauderdale, studying the service of his Majesty, thought it best, for y^{e} obviating of y^{e} misreports and vulgar feares yt were received about the King's Religion, to procure foure or five testimoniall letters to be written from France to assure the people of his Majesty's firmness to the Protestant Religion and to encourage them to take the opportunity to express their loyalty in endeavouring his return. One of these Letters was directed to myselfe from Monsieur Gaches a famous pious preacher at *Charenton* w^{ch}, with the rest, was translated and published by y^{e} Earle of L$^{'ls}$ procurement (Sir Robert Murray[1] being y^{e} man y^{t} in France, procured these writings and sending of y^{m} to y^{e} Earle, y^{e} Countess of Balcarras also assisting y^{e} business)'.

Baxter, in the words thus restored to his narrative, reveals a degree of subservience to Lauderdale and of esteem for him which might well startle his editor; or, at least, which Sylvester might well fear would startle and scandalize many readers, in the light of later events.[2] But, granting that his omissions were prudent, they left a gap which we are glad to fill up. We

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his landing at Dover, and confirmed him in his post as Secretary of State (May 26, 1660).

[1] Sir Robert Murray or Moray (d. 1673).

[2] The *R.B.* was published in 1696.

can see now that Baxter came to meet Lauderdale; that the Earl won him to his views; and that he became a warm King's advocate – along with his friends, Mr Calamy, Dr Manton, Dr Reynolds and others. At the same time, both he and they had strong misgivings. One arose from what they saw around them in the London streets. For, in fierce reaction against Puritan strictness, there was already an outburst of licentiousness which threatened to burst all bounds. When, therefore, Baxter and Dr Manton, at the instance of the rest, waited on General Monck to congratulate him on his decisive action for the King they added an urgent 'request that he would take care that Debauchery and contempt of Religion might not be let loose, upon any mens pretence of being for the King, as it already began with some to be'.[1]

Another misgiving, of tormenting persistency, was due to his fear that the High Prelate's party were plotting to get the upper hand and were likely to succeed; nor was it greatly relieved by what he heard of conferences held in Holland between 'Dr Morley and other divines' on the one hand, and 'several Persons of Honour and some ministers' on the other – conferences, it was said, at which 'Resolutions of Great Moderation and Lenity' were adopted.[2] He knew too much of the secret wheels that were turning. Altogether, one figures Baxter at this juncture, as in a state of considerable distraction – drawn between a loyalty to the King which he thought his first duty, and a dread of the evil consequences to things of greater price which his loyalty might entail. Hence, the utmost he could do was to go forward cherishing a desperate hope. On April 30 – the eve of their vote inviting the King's return – he preached before the Commons at St Margaret's Westminster; and on May 10, a Day of Thanksgiving, he preached before the Lord Mayor at St Paul's. On May 29 the King entered London; and one wonders if Baxter was among the Ministers 'who in their places attended the King with acclamations' – I imagine not. I think he was not in an acclaiming mood. His meditation, day and night, was of concord in the Church and how to make sure of it. His private efforts were incessant. Like Lord Falkland, in another respect, he went about 'ingeminating peace'. He tells how he and Dr Manton met Dr Gauden and Dr Barnard at the latter's lodgings in Gray's Inn to consider terms of Concord; how he had an hour's interview with Dr Morley who 'spake of moderation in general but came to no particular terms'; and how this general talk of concord, with no point in it, met him everywhere.

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[1] See his satirical pamphlet *The Ready Way of Confuting Mr Baxter* (printed first, as Chap. I of his *True History of Councils*, enlarged and defended. . . 1682.

[2] *R.B.*, II, p. 217.

He found 'some plain and moderate Episcopal men' advocating not merely 'Reconciliation and Union with the Presbyterians', but even 'a reward to them for bringing in the King'. Such exuberance of gratitude could not last. The question was, how to turn it to account before it passed into indifference or worse. The Presbyterians had some friends at court, some reason to believe in the goodwill of the King, and some influential agents very near to him like the Earl of Manchester (Lord Chamberlain). Of the Lord Chancellor (Hyde) they could not feel so sure, but his professions were fair enough. It was considered, therefore, an encouraging sign, when 'ten or twelve' of the leading Presbyterian Ministers were nominated to be the King's Chaplains'; and when a motion, made to the King by Lord Broghill at Baxter's instance, that there might be 'a conference with a view to agreement', found favour. This was the first of several conferences, and the most promising. It met in the Lord Chamberlain's lodgings. The King, the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of St Albans etc, and all the Presbyterian Chaplains were present. Baxter was put forward as the chief speaker; and improved his opportunity. He spoke at length, with great plainness – 'not for Presbyterians or any party as such . . . but for the religious part of his subjects as such, than whom no Prince on Earth had better'. He besought him especially to leave them in possession of their faithful ministers; and to further their union throughout the Land by enforcing only things necessary, by 'the true Exercise of Church Discipline against Sin,' and by not 'obtruding unworthy Men upon the People'. The King's answer included a promise to bring about the desired Union, which seemed so clear and resolute that the Ministers were delighted; and 'old Mr Ash burst out into Tears with Joy and could not forbear expressing what Gladness this Promise of his Majesty had put into his heart' (*R.B.*, II, p. 231).

This happened soon after June 25, the day on which Baxter took the oath as Chaplain. About the same time the King asked the Ministers to set down their proposals for an agreement; and, when they begged for leave to consult their brethren in the country, he said '*that* would be too long and make too much noise'. So they undertook to gather the sense of the *London* ministers and others, within the next week or two, the King undertaking to obtain from the Bishops 'the uttermost they could abate and yield for Concord'. There followed a fortnight and more of lively meetings and debatings at 'Sion Colledge', of which the outcome was 'The first address and Proposals of the Ministers'. This, together with a copy of Archbishop Usher's 'Form of Government',[1] was presented to the King in July. It covered 'the Matters of difference, viz., Church Government, Liturgy, Ceremonies'; and was prefaced by 'four particulars' expressly due to Baxter, which some of his colleagues thought irrelevant, but upon which he insisted.[2]

The answer of the Bishops – to whom the King referred the document – was an unqualified repulse, or what Baxter calls 'a contradiction'. The long defence of their Proposals put forth, at once, by the Ministers (but written I think by Baxter) ended on a note of despair – 'We perceive your counsels against peace are not likely to be frustrated. Your desires concerning us are like to be accomplished. You are like to be gratified with our silence and ejection, and the excommunication and consequent sufferings of dissenters'. But he would not yield up the field as some friends advised. On the contrary, he urged it as a duty to do anything and everything which held 'the least possibility of a better issue'. 'It will be a great Blot upon us if we suffer, as refusing to sue for Peace; and it will be our Just Vindication when it shall appear' (to Posterity) 'that we humbly petitioned for and earnestly pursued after

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[1] Called his 'Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Form of Synodical Government received in the ancient Church' (*R.B.*, II, p. 235).

[2] They were 'for the countenancing Godliness, the Ministry, Personal profession, and the Lords Day.' Here, as always, the real things to Baxter were moral and religious.

Peace, and came as near them for the obtaining it as Scripture and Reason will allow us to do, and were ready to do anything for Peace, except to sin and damn our Souls'.[1]

Was it by way of indirect rebuke to the Bishops that just at this time the King commanded Baxter to preach before him in his capacity of Chaplain on July 22 at Whitehall; and then, after listening to such a sermon as he can never have heard before, ordered it to be printed? At any rate, the King's action, so far as it indicated his desire to be impartial, was grateful to Baxter; and, still more so, was the 'Declaration', which, the King drew up, 'to all his loving subjects of his Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales, concerning Ecclesiastical affairs'. A copy of it, before publication, was handed to the Ministers on September 4; and, at first sight, was found disappointing. 'It offers no way of concord' – they said – 'if much in it is not altered'; and Baxter, as usual, was deputed to put into writing their 'Thoughts' of it. He soon did so; but 'when Mr Calamy and Dr Reynolds had read the Paper they were troubled at the Plainness of it and thought it would not be endured'. The Earl of Manchester and one or two other Lords to whom it was submitted, thought the same. Nay, they told him that, in its present form, it would not even be received; and that he must go with it himself. Hence, very unwillingly, he yielded so far as to cut out some passages and modify others. Then, under the title 'a Petition to the King upon our sight of the first draught of his Declaration' it was duly presented[2]; and, soon after, a meeting – to hear the Declaration read – was convened at the Lord Chancellor's on October 22. Besides the King, there were present several Dukes and Earls, a number of Bishops, Deans and Doctors, forming the majority; and 'on the other part stood Dr Reynolds, Mr Calamy, Mr Ash, Dr Wallis, Dr Manton, Dr Spurstow', Baxter, etc.

'The Business of the Day was not to dispute but, as the Lord

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[1] It was not to the Bishops' credit, though natural, if (as Baxter says) they traded on the fact that the Ministers and their followers in the country were not 'formidable' in the sense 'The Anabaptists, Millenaries or Levellers' were. That is, they would not take up Arms. (*R.B.*, II, p. 259).

[2] See, for both the original and altered form of the Petition, *ibid.*, II, p. 265 ff.

Chancellor read over the Declaration, each Party was to speak to what he disliked and the King to determine how it should be as liked himself'. In the end, 'a great many words . . . were spoken about Prelacy and Reordination', by Dr Gunning and Bishop Morley in favour; and by Mr Calamy and Baxter against. It was then that Morley cited (and apparently produced) Baxter's 'Five Disputations' as being the best defence known to him of his own position; and maintained that Baxter was now contradicting himself.[1] An incident at the close (which some, without evidence, have described as a trap for Baxter) had important consequences. The Lord Chancellor produced a Petition for Indulgence from the Independents and Anabaptists – a step which the King had met by adding the clause: 'That others also be permitted to meet for Religious Worship so be it, they do it not to the Disturbance of the Peace; and that no Justice of Peace or Officer (shall) disturb them'. Having read this the Chancellor 'desired all to think on it and give their advice; but all were silent' – all except Baxter. In vain Dr Wallis whispered in his ear, 'say nothing and let the Bishops speak'. Neither side would utter a word – though all knew that the new clause meant a 'Toleration of Papists and Socinians'. Could he acquiesce, in defiance of his avowed opinion? On the other hand, should he 'set all sects and Parties against' him by protesting? Would it not go forth that he cared for nobody's Liberty but his own? All this rushed through his mind; but consistency prevailed. So he said – 'As we humbly thank your Majesty for your indulgence to ourselves, so we distinguish the tolerable Parties from the intolerable: for the former we humbly crave great lenity and favour; but for the latter – such as Papists and Socinians – for our parts, we cannot make their Toleration our request'. Probably this speech (which voiced in a brave but impolitic way the 'Presbyterians' generally), did more to cool the King's zeal for a fair settlement and play into the Bishops' hands, and alienate the Independents, etc., than anything else.

Baxter went home, he says, 'dejected'; and even 'resolved to meddle no more in the business'. For he thought the 'Declaration', as it had been read, impossible. 'But two or three Days after', on his way to the Lord Chancellor's about another matter, he heard newsboys crying the 'King's Declaration' in the streets. At once buying a paper he 'stept into a house to read'; and, to his intense relief, found such alterations as made it what 'any sober honest Ministers might submit to'. He hurried to the Chancellor; and, with many thanks, assured him that if the Declaration, as revised, were passed into law he 'should take it to be his Duty to do his best to procure the full consent of others, and promote our happy concord on these terms; and should rejoyce to see the Day that Factions and Parties may all be swallowed up in Unity, and contentions turned to Brotherly love'.

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[1] An audacity which took Baxter's breath away and to which he often afterwards referred.

It was a break in the clouds which seemed the augury of a clear sky; and filled him with joy. No wonder, therefore, that when the Chancellor asked him 'whether he would accept of a Bishoprick' he felt like saying 'Yes' on the spot. He had been sounded on the subject 'a little time before'; but had said 'No' on the spot, because the Declaration, as it then was, retained 'the old Diocesan frame of Church Government', and, under that frame, he could not be a Governor. But the Declaration, as revised, associated Presbyters with the Bishop and gave to every Minister a due measure of authority in his own parish; and this made all the difference. The only question now was whether he could 'serve the Church best in that way, or in some other'. Therefore, he 'desired some farther time for consideration'. But the Chancellor was not inclined to wait. At his next visit, two days later, he brought Baxter to an immediate answer, which was a grateful but positive refusal. He gave his reasons in a fine letter (dated November 1) which concluded thus: 'Whereas the Vicar of the Parish where I lived will not resign but accept me only as his curate, if your Lordship would procure him some Prebendary or other place of competent Profit (for I dare not motion him to any Pastoral charge or place that requireth preaching) that so he might resign that Vicaridge to me without his loss I should take it as a very great favour. But if there be any great inconveniences or Difficulties in the way, I can well be content to be his Curate'. From this it appears that Mr Dance was willing to take Baxter as his curate and Baxter was willing to serve in that capacity; but begged that the Vicar might be enabled to resign – in this no doubt expressing the almost unanimous desire of the Parish. Then – be it noticed – Baxter, under the new order foreshadowed by the King's revised Declaration, would gladly have accepted the Vicarage. So matters stood in November 1660.

We may here introduce a reference to two letters from his Kidderminster 'friends and neighbours' about this time, which disclose, in a vivid way, their love and gratitude and anxiety. The first (undated) begins: 'Although the frequency of our neighbours going and returning hath given us opportunites of hearing of your competent Health, to our great comfort; and your remembrance of us in your letters testified your respects to us, yett because wee are not ignorant of the multitude of your important imploiments wee were the more remisse to this business'. From his own letters, and the report of neighbours to whom a London visit is no rare thing, they know of his doings and their importance. For fear of increasing his burden they have not hitherto written, nor do they write now except to assure him of their 'respect', and their sense of what they owe to him – *even our own selves*[1] – and their appreciation of 'good Mr Waldern's profitable labours', and their longing for his speedy return, if it might be God's will. We are 'very apprehensive of the need of your presence, especially in this Juncture of affaires, for, however our danger is not so great by seducers as when by God's mercey we enjoyed your personall inspection . . . yet have the floods of ungodliness made us afraid'. These last words; and mention, further on, of the 'prophane and crooked generation among whom we live', suggest an outbreak of licentious conduct at Kidderminster as elsewhere. The 'sinners' had broken the cords with which Baxter's hand had tied them, and were become a trouble to the 'saints'. There is no mention of any ecclesiastical trouble. But in the second letter dated August 2, 1660, there is. The writers are alarmed because they 'suspect' the coming of 'a storm either to swallow us (we being without our vigilant and tender Pastor) or so to divide us as may cause great thoughts of heart. For enquiry hath bin made of the Churchwardens for the common prayer booke by such as formerly did, and we believe (if there be opportunity) will again, make use of it, with its appurtenances; and though we conceive nothing is so likely to impede it as your presence, which (though) we cannot so suddenly expect as our emergent necessity requires, in regard the tyme of your attendance on his Majestie is so nigh – yet wee most earnestly importune you that nothing in the world (except absolute necessity) may one day' (i.e. for a single day) 'retarde your coming'. Not a word is here, or in the former letter – it will be noticed – about Mr Dance. For the writers, he is a non-entity. Mr Waldern still does the preaching and the order of service is still the same as Baxter used. But a change is threatened. Sir Ralph Clare's party are at work to get back the Prayer-book; and Baxter's presence is needed to cry halt. Baxter, as we have seen, was tethered to London; and it may be that the Prayer-book was restored. We have no light on the point. More likely, however, things remained as they were, so long as the negotiations about Baxter's succession to the Vicarage or its Curacy were pending. The futile course of these has already been traced. It dragged on for nearly a year; and only reached its inevitable end with Baxter's visit to Kidderminster in August 1661.

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[1] These words are written large.

But before we come to that we must attend him, meanwhile, in London. His hope rested in the King's Declaration; and, particularly, in its promise that the Liturgy should be reviewed and reformed and new forms drawn up in Scripture phrase, suited to the several parts of worship, that men might use which of them they pleased.[1] If this could be done, and settled by law, 'our divisions', he said, 'are at an end'. The next urgent step, therefore, was to bring the two sides together for amicable discussion.

Baxter was incessant in beseeching the Lord Chancellor to hasten the matter; and so, at length, a commission under the Broad seal was granted on March 25, 1661, for twelve nominated Bishops and twelve Divines, with nine assistants on each side, 'to sit in the Master's Lodgings in the Strand' and determine the points in question. Dr Reynolds and Mr Calamy had the nominating of the twelve divines, and Baxter begged them to leave him out, since he 'found that the last Debates had made' him 'unacceptable with' his 'superiors'. One wonders what would have happened if they had done so. At their first meeting (on April 8) all were present; and the Bishops instantly took up the '*non possumus*' attitude which they maintained throughout. 'It is not we' – said the Bishop of London (Sheldon) – 'that have sought this conference and desire Alterations in the Liturgy, and, therefore, we have nothing to say or do till you bring in all that you have to say against it in Writing and all the additional Forms and Alterations which you desire'. The spirit thus manifested was so discouraging that the other divines would have voted for going no farther; but Baxter overruled them[1]; and, after some demur, they agreed to tell the Bishops that they would do what was imposed upon them on condition that they were allowed to bring in their 'exceptions' at one time; and their 'additions', at another. To this the Bishops assented.

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[1] This is Baxter's paraphrase of § 79 of the 'Declaration'.

Then ensued, for Baxter, an amazing fortnight. Undertaking themselves to draw up 'the exceptions', the eleven left it with him to draw up 'the additions'. 'Hereupon I departed from them, and came among them no more till I had finished my Task (which was a Fortnight's time). My leisure was too short for the doing of it with that *Accurateness* which a Business of that Nature doth require, or for the consulting with Men or Authors. I could not have time to make use of any Book, save the Bible and my concordance (comparing all with the Assemblies Directory and the Book of Common Prayer and *Hammond L'Estrange*). And at the Fortnight's End I brought it to the other Commissioners'. What he had achieved was an 'entire Liturgy'[2] – though not as an *alternative*, *in toto*, to the Common Prayer but as 'alterations and additions' which might be 'inserted into the several respective places' of that Book 'to which they belong'.

When he rejoined the eleven he 'found them but entering on' their part of the work, and not in accord about it. In fact, 'the exceptions', also, were left to him; and yet when he 'drew up such Faults as, in Perusing' the Book, occurred to him they reduced the list 'to a few brief exceptions in general'.[1] It is interesting and important to apprehend just how Baxter felt about the Book of Common Prayer. '. . . I told them that I was not of their Mind, who charged the Common Prayer with false Doctrine, or Idolatry, or false Worship in the Matter or Substance, nor that took it to be a Worship which a Christian might not lawfully join in, when he had not Liberty and Ability for better; and that I always took the Faults of the Common Prayer to be, chiefly *Disorder* and *Defectiveness*; and so, that it was a true Worship, though imperfect; and Imperfection was the Charge that we had against it (considered as distinct from the Ceremonies and Discipline). I looked at it as at the Prayers of many a weak Christian that I have heard who prayed with Disorder and Repetition and unfit Expressions. I would not prefer such a weak Christian in Prayer before a better; but yet if I separated from such an one, or thought it unlawful to join such an one, I should be sinfully Curious and Uncharitable. And I think this was the mind of all the Brethren, save one, as well as mine; and old Mr *Ash* hath often told us that this was the Mind of the old Nonconformists and that he hath often heard some weak Ministers so disorderly in Prayer, especially in Baptism and the Lords supper, that he could have wished that they would rather use the Common Prayer'.[2]

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[1] See *R.B.*, II, p. 306, for his 'good reason'.

[2] 'But I might not call it so' (*ibid.*, II, p. 306).

It was now May 1661 – a critical month in Baxter's view, as is evident from the following notes:

At this time Convocation was chosen and the Diocesan Party wholly carried it – partly, because so many hundreds of Ministers had been forced to yield place to the old incumbents, and partly, because of the 'scruples of conscience of Ministers who thought it unlawful to have anything to do in the choice of such an Assembly'.

Nevertheless in London the Puritan Ministers had still a majority, so that when the election came off in Christ Church they were able to choose Baxter as one of their representatives, the other being Mr Calamy. But the Bishop – to Baxter's satisfaction, at any rate – by an exercise (however partial) of his legal right dropped them out. 'How should I have been there baited' – he exclaims – 'and what a vexatious place I should have had in such an Assembly'!

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[1] This means that his 'exceptions', covering twenty-three folio pages (*R.B.*, II, pp. 308–33) were not presented. They were 'laid by' (*ibid.*, p. 307).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 307. Thus in 1661, did he describe and defend the attitude which he actually took up after 1662.

'The seventh day of May was a Meeting at *Sion-Colledge* of all the London Ministers for the choice of a President and Assistants for the next Year; where (some of the Presbyterians, upon a pettish scruple, absenting themselves) the Diocesane Party carried it, and so got the Possession and Rule of the Colledge'.[1] 'The eighth day of May the new Parliament and Convocation sat down, being constituted of Men fitted and devoted to the Diocesan Interest'. 'On the two and twentieth day of *May*, by order of Parliament, the National Vow and covenant was burnt in the Street by the Hands of the common Hangman' (*R.B.*, II, pp. 333–4).

I have quoted these items as illustrating the atmosphere amid which the Bishops and the Divines came to their second meeting on May 4. Less than ever was there any hope of a free conference. So far as appears, after the Divines had given in their 'Paper of Exceptions', nothing was done. At a later meeting they gave in the Paper of 'Additions', or 'the Reformation of the Liturgy'. But this time the Bishops were not to escape so easily. For the Divines, moved thereto by Baxter, had prepared 'a Petition for Peace' which he drew up at their desire and which he was bent upon reading to their lordships. Some of them objected; and says Baxter slyly, so they would *all* have done if they had known what was in it. In fact, not only was its length portentous[2]; but also, from end to end, it was a searching appeal to the conscience. Anyone who wishes to understand Baxter should read it. It will bring home to him with what intensity of vision and feeling Baxter grasped the high issues at stake. On the other hand, it will show him just where the Bishops failed: they failed (quite apart from the merits of their case) in moral and religious earnestness. This was the glaring contrast between them and Baxter. Accordingly, his appeal did not move them in the least, except to impatience; and they paid him back by returning – 'a good while after' – such an answer as made no 'abatements or alterations' 'worth the naming'. Then the divines decided that a statement should be prepared going over the whole ground, and exhibiting 'how unpeaceably the Bishops managed the business'. Again his colleagues fell back on the willing Baxter; and, in order to be undisturbed, he 'went out of Town to Dr Spurstow's Home in Hackney for Retirement, where, in eight days time,' the task was done. It had no desired effect on the Bishops who still refused to discuss the 'Particulars' set forth in it and the former papers. 'They resolutely insisted on it that they had nothing to do till we had proved that there was any necessity of Alterations – which we had not yet done; and that they were there to answer to our Proofs'. Baxter thought the Papers contained Proofs enough – but then, there was good reason to believe that the Bishops had not so much as read the Papers!

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[1] Which they have retained to this day.

[2] The Petition (with Baxter's Liturgy) was printed in the same volume this same year (1661), and covers twenty closely printed 8vo. pages.

It was now within ten days of the time when the proceedings must end[1]; and, all hope of a pacific conference having failed, it was arranged that the two sides should save their face by conducting a 'dispute', in logical style, on certain specified points – such as kneeling at the sacrament, and the character of 'things indifferent'. But in this, neither the Bishops as a whole, nor the Divines as a whole, took any part. It straightway narrowed itself to a display of scholastic skill mainly between Baxter and Bishop Gunning. Often 'not a man' of Baxter's company was present, and only 'some' of the Bishops. After the second day outsiders were admitted and made up most of the audience; so that the Room was wellnigh full of them. There can be no doubt that at such a bout of logic-chopping Baxter was in his element; but it was a pitiful waste of time and temper. Finally, 'when the evening of the last day was far agone' Baxter came to an understanding with Bishop Morley to meet no more; and not to report anything to the King except this – 'that we were all agreed on the *ends* for the Churches welfare, Unity, and Peace, and his Majesty's Happiness and Contentment; but, after all our debates, were disagreed of the Means'.[2] Nevertheless, the divines met once more, *by them-*

[1] Four months was the limit.

[2] *R.B.*, II, p. 357.

selves; and came to a resolution, once more to approach the King. They would lay before him their endeavours, and add a 'Petition for his Promised help'.[1] But first they consulted the Lord Chancellor who at once made Baxter feel that, in his eyes, *he* was the one to blame most for the breakdown. He said – 'I was severe and strict, like a Melancholy Man and made those things sin which others did not'. His judgment, in this respect, was but confirmed by the aforesaid Petition which Baxter (as usual) had drawn up at the Brethren's desire; and had in his hand. Glancing through it Clarendon pronounced 'some Passages too pungent or pressing'. The Lord Chamberlain (Manchester), in his turn, was of the same opinion, and even urged that these and other passages should be blotted out. 'Sir Gilbert Gerrard (an ancient godly man) being with him', agreed. Under such pressure, Baxter had to yield. But this was not all. For when the time came to present the Petition, Manchester secretly told Baxter's friends that it would fare better without him. When they remonstrated, he professed that he did not himself desire his exclusion but was simply stating a fact. Baxter heard of it and immediately took his leave. The Earl, however, went after him 'to the stairs' and importuned him to return – which he did, but in the background; and resolved on silence. Dr Manton took the lead in his place; and after his reading of the Petition the King put a question to which Baxter replied in a sentence or two – perhaps the last words he ever uttered at Court.

He had managed somehow, with the best intentions, to offend the King, the Lord Chancellor, Manchester, and the Bishops. He was by far the one most blamed by all these and their party generally. Nor did he complain of this. He was content to be the scapegoat. 'For myself the Reason why I spake so much was because it was the desire of my Brethren, and I was loth to expose *them* to the hatred of the Bishops; but was willinger to take it all upon myself – they themselves having so much wit as to be therein more sparing and cautelous than I; and I thought that the *Day* and *Cause* commanded me those two things which then were objected against me as my Crimes, viz., *speaking too boldly and too long*. And I thought it a Cause that I could comfortably suffer for; and should as willingly be a Martyr for Charity as for Faith' (*R.B.*, II, p. 365).

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[1] In this they did not break their understanding with Morley: for they were careful 'not to cast the least unmeet reflection on' the Bishops and to deal only with their own case (*R.B.*, II, pp. 366–8).

The 'Conference' broke up in July, by which time the new Parliament had given full proof of its temper, a temper reflected in the populace. Now, says Baxter, 'our Calamities began to be much greater than before. We were called all by the name of Presbyterian (the odious name) though we never put up one Petition for Presbyterianism but pleaded for Primitive Episcopacy. We were represented, in the common talk of those who thought it their interest to be our Adversaries, as the most seditious People, unworthy to be used like men, or to enjoy our common Liberty among them'.

He himself was singled out for special attention. 'No Sermon that I preached, scarce escaped the censure of being *Seditious*'. He instances a sermon preached by him at 'Rickmersworth in Hartfordshire' – apparently during a week-end visit soon after the conference – from Matthew xxii. 12 (*He was speechless*) which some hearer, or hearers, so twisted in letters to London as to make it 'a heinous crime against the King'!

§ 2

LAST VISIT TO KIDDERMINSTER

July(?) – November(?) 1661

Shortly after this he went down to Kidderminster. Just when he arrived there, is not quite certain. If a letter[1] addressed to him there on July 20 from his friend Rev John Reynolds of Wolverhampton may be correctly referred to 1661 (as seems probable), he was there at that time; and certainly he was there by August 11 when the Rev Jonathan[2] Jenner (of Dunhead?) wrote to him at 'his house in Kidderminster'; and when (by a coincidence) Baxter wrote to him 'neer ten a clock at night'.[3] The date of his return to London is also not quite certain but is fixed within a week or so by his statement[4] that it was just when his book called *the Mischiefs of Self-ignorance and Benefits of Self-Acquaintance* was coming out of 'the Press' i.e. in November. Thus his visit extended over at least three months; and for any account of its incidents we are limited to Baxter himself.

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[1] Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. iv, ff. 371–3^{b}.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i, ff. 3^{a}, 4^{ab}.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i, ff. 5^{ab} – 6^{ab}.

[4] *R.B.*, II, p. 377.

His object in going was to see what could be done toward his settlement, by a personal appeal to Bishop Morley and Sir Ralph Clare. 'I went . . . to try whether it were possible to have any honest Terms from the Reading Vicar[1] there, that I might preach to my former Flock. But when I had preached twice or thrice, he denied me liberty to preach any more. I offered him to take my Lecture, which he was bound to allow me (under a Bond of £500); but he refused it. I next offered him to be his Curate and he refused it. I next offered him to preach for nothing and he refused it. And, lastly, I desired leave but once to Adminster the Sacrament to the People and preach my Farewell sermon to them; but he would not consent. At last I understood that he was directed by his Superiors to do what he did; but Mr *Baldwin* (an able preacher whom I left there) was yet permitted. At the time, my aged Father lying in great pain of the Stone and Strangury, I went to visit him[2] (Twenty miles further); and while I was there Mr *Baldwin* came to me, and told me that he also was forbidden to preach. We returned both to *Kidderminster*, and having a Lecture at *Sheffnel* [i.e. Shifnal] in the way, I preached there, and stayed not to hear the evening Sermon because I would make haste to the Bishop. It fell out that my turn at another Lecture was on the same day with that at *Sheffnel* (viz. at *Cleibury*) [i.e. at Cleobury]. . . . And many were there met in expectation to hear me; but a Company of Soldiers were there (as the Countrey thought, to have apprehended me) who shut the Doors against the Ministers that would have preached in my stead (bringing a Command to the Churchwarden to hinder any one that had not a License from the Bishop); and the poor people that had come from far were fain to go home with grieved hearts'. 'The next day it was confidently reported that a certain knight offered the Bishop his Troop to apprehend me if I offered to preach; and the People dissuaded me from going to the Bishop, supposing my Liberty in danger. But I went that Morning with Mr *Baldwin*, and in the hearing of him and Dr *Warmestry*, then Dean of *Worcester*, I remembered the Bishop of his Promise to grant me his Licence etc, but he refused me liberty to preach in his Diocess, though I offered him to preach only on the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, Catechistical Principles, and only to such as had no preaching' (*R.B.*, II, pp. 374, 5). Then and there, it seems, the Bishop silenced him.[1]

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[1] Before this, on March 28, to foreclose all further 'demands' from Mr Dance he was made to give a receipt in full for all alleged claims upon Baxter, after a payment to him of £7. The receipt was given to Lawrence Pearsall etc. (Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, f. 415^a.

[2] Most likely at Eaton Constantine. His father died in February 1663 and on December 17, 1667, certain lands and houses at Eaton Constantine were let on lease, with provision for his stepmother's continued residence there (Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. v, f. 318^b.

His last sermon actually preached in St Mary's was on the text 'Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do' (Luke xxiii. 34). It happened that on the following morning the 'Covenant', by public order, was burnt in the Market place under Baxter's window. At the time there was 'a meeting of many Ministers' at his house – perhaps the last of those weekly gatherings for dinner and conversation which had run their happy course through all the years of his second period. The burning took place whilst they were at dinner; and the attendance thereat was so small that none of them knew of it till afterwards. Yet it went abroad that the sermon which had been preached the previous day 'was preached against the burning of the covenant'; and that the meeting of Ministers had to do with a rebellion in the North of which Baxter was alleged to be the Head! What he meant for his farewell sermon in the Parish Church was on the text John xvi. 22 and was never delivered. But Baxter did preach a farewell sermon. He preached it in the house of James Boucher, the saintly husbandman or small Freeholder to whose skill in divinity and ability in prayer and uprightness he pays so fine a tribute. Boucher lived at Wannerton – a secluded spot now and doubly so then. Thither came his friends to a last service on the eve of their Pastor's return to London; and to them he preached from 1 Chronicles xiii. 3 ('Bring back the ark of God into the City') the main theme of his sermon being to persuade them 'not to forsake the public assembly for the Liturgy's or people's faults but yet not to own an intolerable Minister'.[1] There is no reason to think that Baxter ever came back to Kidderminster, and so this may be accepted as his final farewell. It may well make Wannerton something of a shrine to Kidderminster people.

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[1] Baxter's 'Account of the causes of his being forbidden by the Bishop . . .' was given in a letter to Kidderminster (dated November 11, 1661) which he prefixed to his book on the *Mischiefs of Self-ignorance* . . . (1662).

But although Baxter was back in London by November we must linger behind a little while – to see how it fared with his shepherdless flock. Mr Dance, the Vicar, could not preach; and what the people craved was good preaching. This the Bishop pledged himself to supply; and in what way he did so Baxter tells us. At first 'he got . . . a few scandalous Men, with some that were more civil, to keep up the Lecture, till the paucity of their audiences gave him a pretence to put it down'. Among these was 'one Mr Pitt' . . .[2] who often spent his time in calling the folk 'Presbyterians, Rebellious Serpents, and Generation of Vipers, unlikely to escape the Damnation of Hell . . .' Next, 'they set up one of the best parts they could get – a most scandalous person – who was quickly aweary and went away'. Another was 'a poor dry man that had been a Schoolmaster' near by; and 'after a little time he died'. Then they tried a change, by means of 'a young man (the best they could get)', who overdid it in praising Baxter from the Pulpit and otherwise seeking to conciliate the people. So much for the Lecture. Meanwhile, at the outset, Bishop Morley 'came himself one day and preached to them, a long Invective against them and me, as Presbyterians and I know not what; so that the People wondered that ever a Man would venture to come up into a Pulpit, and speak so confidently to a People that he knew not, the things, which they commonly knew to be untrue'. 'When the Bishop was gone, the Dean came and preached about three hours or more, to cure them of the Admiration of my Person; and a month after came again and preached over the same, persuading the People that they were Presbyterians and Schismatical, and were led to it by their overvaluing of me. The People admired at the temerity of these men, and really thought that they were scarce well in their Wits, that would go on to speak things so far from truth of Men whom they never knew, and that to their own faces' (*R.B.*, II, pp. 375, 6).

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[1] See Appendix No. 9.

[2] 'Who lived in Sir John Packington's House with Dr Hammond and was of the Judgment and Spirit of Dr Gunning'.

The general result was to intensify Anti-Episcopal feeling. Writing three or four years later Baxter says: 'I hear not of one person among them who is won to the love of Prelacy or Formality since my removal'. It did not increase such love when, under the 'Corporation Act' (December 1661) 'the thirteen Capital Burgesses, Bailiff, Justice and all – save one that had been an Officer in the King's Army – were turned out . . . and almost all the twenty-five inferior Burgesses were turned out with them'. The Act required laymen holding civic office to declare that there was 'no obligation upon them or any other person, from the Oath called the Solemn League and Covenant'. This declaration the Burgesses could not honestly make – 'though never more than two or three of them had taken the Oath and Covenant themselves';[1] and their refusal, quite groundlessly, was charged to Baxter's persuasion. A month or so before, many of his old neighbours, in and out of Kidderminster, were made to suffer on the score of what 'was said to be a Baxter's Plot'. A letter from a nameless person was directed to Rev Ambrose Sparry, Minister of Martly, desiring that he and Captain Yarrington would 'be ready with Money and Arms at the time appointed';[2] and that he would 'acquaint Mr Oasland and Mr Baxter with it'. This letter, being found under a hedge, was carried to Sir John Packington ('the man who hotly pursued such work') who thereupon sent the three men to prison.[3] Mr Henry Jackson, 'our Physician at Kidderminster' and many others were, also, imprisoned: 'but Mr Jackson was so merry a man, and they were all so cheerful there that I think they were released the sooner because it appeared so small a suffering to them' (*R.B.*, II, p. 383).

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[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 376. Baxter had kept his people from taking it in 1643 – so he says in his published Farewell sermon (printed 1683), pp. 36, 37. He had taken the covenant himself and 'repented thereof'.

[2] A narrative of the plot dated November 22 seems to make Saturday, November 9, the appointed day (Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. v, f. 170.

[3] Baxter, of course, was out of his reach. The trouble of this time is reflected in the letter quoted on p. 310 *infra*.

Baxter, plainly, was a danger to his friends, and, on this account, resolved neither to write to them 'past once a year' nor to take up his dwelling among them – 'because they apprehended themselves that my presence would have been their ruine as to Liberty and estates' (*ibid.*, II, p. 376). On the other hand, the Town was fortunate in the residence of one whose coming at first was dreaded. This was Lord Windsor[1] (Lord-Lieutenant of the county) who bought a house in the Town, 'as most thought to watch over them as a dangerous People'.

At his first coming, says Baxter, 'I was there' (i.e. in the autumn of 1661) 'and went to him and told him (truly) that I was glad of his coming . . . for an innocent People are never so safe as under their Governor's eye, seeing slanders have their power most on strangers that are unacquainted with the Persons or things'. In the event, his presence secured them 'Three years of as great quietness and liberty as any place I knew in the land' (*ibid.*, II, p. 377): for he found that to know them was to esteem and trust them.

Before leaving his friends Baxter did what he could to provide for their spiritual needs. 'Having parted with my dear flock' (he says) 'with mutual sense and tears I left Mr Baldwin to live privately among them and oversee them in my stead and visit them from house to house'. Mr Baldwin had once been Schoolmaster at Kidderminster and afterwards succeeded Mr Lee the sequestered Minister of Chaddesley Corbet who came back with the Restoration. Thus he was free to undertake the charge which Baxter commended to him. He 'was sent me' (as schoolmaster) – says Baxter – 'by Mr Vines from Cambridge: a good Schollar; a sober, calm, grave, moderate, peaceable minister, whose conversation I never heard one person blame for any one Word or Deed; an extraordinary Preacher'.[1] With him he joined Rev Richard Serjeant, his former assistant, who had just been replaced at Stone (Worcestershire) by its sequestered Minister, Rev Richard Spicer[2] and come to live in or near Kidderminster. It was a happy arrangement, for they were of one mind in their work; and 'the people consented to be ruled by' them. But it should be noted that the people here meant were not the parishioners at large. They were the 600 or so who formed the Church and were the willing subjects of Church-discipline. In this respect they were already a separated body; and the temptation would be strong to make the separation an open breach. Hence, Baxter's urgent parting advice: 'Notwithstanding all the injuries you have received, and all the Failings of the Ministers that preach to you, and the Defect of the present way of Worship, yet keep to the Publick assemblies and make use of such helps as may be had in publick, together with your private helps'. Their meetings from house to house were for mutual edification as they had been in the old days; but they must not be made a substitute for the regular services of the Church and the idea of forming themselves into a separate Church with Minister and sacraments of their own never occurred to him, nor at first to them.

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[1] Thos Windsor, formerly Hickman, 7th Baron Windsor of Stanwell and 1st Earl of Plymouth (1627–87). There was a Blount in his pedigree and a connection with Bordlesly Abbey. He was appointed Governor of Jamaica in July 1661; but did not arrive there till August 1662. It was between these dates, and after his return in October 1662, that he resided at Kidderminster. He was buried at Tardebigg, Worcestershire. (See *D. N. B.*)

The utmost Baxter allowed was temporary abstention for sufficient reasons – as for example the absolute incompetence of the Minister, or his fundamental heresy, or his Antinomian laxity (*R.B.*, II, p. 376). But they must not, even then, be provoked to revile the Church, or to clash with its times of service, or to refuse its ordinances. They must be willing to wait, and if need be suffer, in hope of a providential change by which its doors might become wide enough to receive all such Nonconformists as himself and as he had made *them*. This was his attitude from first to last; and his own practice was in accordance with it.[1] He frequented the Parish Church wherever he might be, and communicated wherever possible. His wife did likewise. His influence with many Ministers and friends drew, or held them, to a similar course. It is not surprising, therefore, if some of his Kidderminster friends were perplexed.[2] He said so much for concord that they began to ask why he did not conform. And his *Cure of Church Divisions* – published in 1670 but written two years before – gave a sharp point to the question. For its sole purpose was to keep 'weak Christians from being Dividers or Troublers of the Church' – the weak Christians specially aimed at being those who thought it a 'sin to hear a conformist' and 'to pray according to the Common Prayer' or 'to communicate with them in the Sacrament'. By an accident the book created an extraordinary stir. Baxter had two publishers, Nevill Simmons of Kidderminster and J. Tyton of London. The former removed to London, whereupon the two became jealous rivals 'in a meer desire of gain'; and when the printing of *The Cure* fell to Simmons, Tyton, who had previously snatched a glance at the MS., set it abroad that the Book was written 'against Private Meetings' (like those held by Mr Baldwin) and was all for Conformity. Tyton was an Independent; and, through him, it was the Independents who first got hold of the story, which soon travelled down to Kidderminster in a highly embroidered form. It was told how not only did Baxter write for Conformity, but also that he had actually conformed, and preached his recantation Sermon before the King – 'as stirring him up to Cruelty against the Nonconformists'. Nay, the very text of his sermon was quoted. About the same time (1670) Mr Dance died; and a new Vicar had to be appointed. The Patron was

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[1] *R.B.*, III, p. 92.

[2] Who had willingly yielded to him not only his living but also his daughter! (*Calamy* 'Continuation', vol. ii, p. 893). 'He never preached statedly after his ejectment but lived upon his estate at Hagley where he was buried' (Palmer's *Nonconformist Memorial*, ii, p. 546).

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[1] (*a*) As soon as he settled in Acton July 1663 he 'went every Lords Day to the Publick Assembly when there was any Preaching or Catechizing'.

(*b*) And John Sharp (1645–1714) Archbishop, of York, writing on March 16, 1696–7, testifies that 'Mr Baxter for so long as he lived in my parish' (St Bartholomew's to which he was appointed 1675) 'seldom failed when he was well of coming to our Prayers and Sermons twice every Lords Day and receiving the communion with us, at the raile, once or twice every year. This I speak of with my own knowledge' (Hist. Mss. Comm. Lang. MSS., vol. i, p. 484. Cp. *R.B.*, II, p. 437).

[2] See *R.B.*, III, p. 73.

Mr Thomas Foley who had bought the living from Colonel John Bridges, 'with a condition' that he should present it to Baxter if 'capable', i.e. if willing to conform.

Then, this rumour of the vacancy blending with rumour of the book, produced a public and definite Statement that at last he was reclaimed to the Church. 'Take it on my Word' – said the Archbishop of York (Sterne)[1] 'Mr Baxter doth conform and is gone to his beloved Kidderminster'. A third incident, occasioned by the same book and rumour, connects itself with the (2nd) Earl of Lauderdale who may not have read the book but seems to have credited the rumour. Hence before going down to Scotland (July 1670) he had two interviews with Baxter and offered him, with the King's consent, whatever place, in the northern establishment, he 'would choose, either a Church or a College in the University or a Bishoprick'. He refused: but his refusal expressed no dissent from the Earl's Churchly scheme save in details, and was based simply on personal and domestic grounds.[2] There could be no clearer proof, if proof were needed, of his content with a qualified Episcopacy.

All this enables us to understand the uneasiness of some at Kidderminster. But there was another side. However much their old Pastor might wish them to cultivate a charitable frame of mind and rule of conduct in relation to the Parish Church, he was not unreasonable. He knew of the vexations which came upon them through the Conventicle Act[3] and could sympathize with Mr Baldwin whose experiences did so 'alienate him from Prelacy and Conformity, and the People with him', that, at length, they refused to communicate, though, to please Baxter, they went for the sermon.[4] His sympathy, if not his approval, is revealed in a letter written to Thomas Beavans, Master of the Wolverley Free School,[1] who wrote to him on July 12, 1669, and again on August 3 (*inter alia*) about some people at Kidderminster who take 'the Common Prayer Book' to be idolatry; and wished him to remonstrate. To which Baxter answers (August 16) that he left 'not one of that mind' when he came away and that their existence is the inevitable result of the Bishop's policy. As to interfering, he has no legal right, and his doing so would but make further trouble, nor is there any need. 'I have long on purpose publisht my full Judgment on these Matters in my *Five Disputations*'. 'I have no more to say'. 'Only I must needs tell you that those men who thinke that if they can drive away the lawfull Pastors of a Church, and then revile them, and set over the people such as they neither do nor ought to owne (unless that darkness were the way to heaven); and when they have done, cry out of Schisme, Separation, Faction etc (because they will not dance after their pipe nor trust their soules to the conduct of the blind) should rather be pittyed than pleased by the people till they better understand what a Pastor is, and what a Church is, and what a man is'.[2]

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[1] 1596?–1683. Archbishop from October 1660 to his death. See *R.B.*, II, p. 306 for Baxter's estimate of him.

[2] *Ibid.*, III, pp. 75–82.

[3] 'While they continued to repeat Sermons in their Houses together, many of them were laid long in Jayls (among thieves and Common Malefactors): which increased their Exasperations yet more. They continued their meetings, whilst their Goods were seized on, and they were Fined and Punished again and again' (*Ibid.*, III, p. 73).

[4] *Ibid.*, III, p. 92.

Here, in writing privately to a censor of his old friends, Baxter stands up for them. Organized separation from the Parish Church was not the less repulsive to him; but, like his own 'Meer Nonformity', he can see that it might be regarded by Mr Baldwin and his People as a necessity. If so, he had no more to say.

Yet, as a matter of fact, when Baxter wrote his last letter to them about 1681 they were still in communion with the Parish Church.[3] 'I am glad to hear', he says, 'that you lovingly join together in the public congregation'. A good reason for this was the character of the Vicar (Rev Richard White (1677–92)). 'God hath given you an able and pious man. Take him and Mr Baldwin and Mr Serjeant conjunct for your teachers and guides. All these thoroughly agreeing and never needlessly withdrawing from each other, will do more than one'. There was, indeed, a state of happy union in the Parish at this time; and down at least to the death of Mr Baldwin in 1693. For Mr White 'who had a great friendship for him and whom he often heard' (*Calamy*, Account in 774), preached his funeral sermon[1] and spoke of him in terms of warm admiration. It seems, therefore, to be a safe conclusion that there was no formation of a separate Congregational Church until after Mr White's death.

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[1] Since April 1663. Thirteen years later he was ordained and became High Master and Priest of Wolverley. Prattenton MSS. The letters (four) are in the Baxter MSS. (Letters), vols. ii and iv.

[2] In closing Baxter says: 'It is so long since I was at Kidderminster and have so little busyed myselfe abroad that I know not yourselfe or who you are who have thence written to mee, only I conjecture that you are the Schoolmaster by the ingenuity of your writing, and because I left none there of your name, but have no other knowledge of you. Pardon this tediousness of your servant Ric Baxter. P.S. I wrote my opinion to Mr Hieron about their communicating with him. I hope he received it'. Beavans appears to have lived in Kidderminster, though his school was at Wolverley.

[3] 'A census of the parish taken at' the institution of Rev Richard White (Octo-

§ 3

LIFE IN LONDON (1660–63)

Nothing has been said, so far, of Baxter's life in London, apart from its central episode; nor is there much to say. For a few weeks, after his arrival on April 13, 1660, he lodged somewhere unnamed[2]; and, during this time, was 'much weakened' by 'another fit of Bleeding', from which he recovered 'by the mercey of God; the help of Dr Bates, and the moss of a dead man's skull'. Then, for about a year, he 'lived at the house of Thomas Foley in Austin Fryers';[3] and, for about another year, he 'tabled' (was a paying guest?), at Dr Micklethwait's House in Little Brittain'.[4] This brings us near to the time of his marriage September, 1662, when he removed to Moorfields (*R.B.*, I, p. 106). As to his occupations we can safely say that they consisted, as usual, of writing and preach-

ber 1677) 'returned 1,587 Churchmen, 8 Papists and 14 Nonconformists, which looks as if the inhabitants had taken Baxter's parting advice and contented themselves with the Ministry of the Church' (Burton – *History of Kidderminster*, p. 121).

[1] If Baldwin died in 1693 and White preached his funeral sermon, then 1692 must mark the retirement, not the death, of the latter.

[2] Possibly with his old friend Colonel Silvanus Taylor, who was a J.P. for Westminster and before whom he made a Declaration of submission to the 'free and general Pardon' of Charles II on May 12 (see Appendix No. 7).

[3] Within the walls between Bishopsgate and The Royal Exchange.

[4] Without the Walls west of Aldersgate Street.

ing, most of his time going to the former.[1] At first he preached for nothing all over London; and, of course, to crowded congregations. At the end of a year, however, he arranged with his friend Dr Bates, the Pastor, to preach regularly once a week at St Dunstan's-in-the-West; and, for this, he had 'some maintenance'. His ministry here was cut short by an accident. While he was preaching, 'a little lime and dust (and perhaps a piece of Brick or two) fell down in the Steeple or Belfry', and put the whole congregation into a panic. Baxter sat down; and, as soon as he could be heard, entreated silence, and went on. But 'some that stood upon a Wainscot-Bench near the Communion Table, break the Bench with their weight, so that the noise renewed the Fear again, and they were worse disordered than before'. Again, when they were quieted, he went on. But it was his last sermon there. For, as the Church was known to be 'very old, rotten and dangerous' it was closed and taken in hand for repairs. He 'preached out his quarter' (which may mean the period of his St Dunstan's agreement) 'at St Bride's in the other end of Fleet Street'; and, afterwards, 'every Lord's Day at Blackfriars where Mr Gibbons was Minister'. He 'preached a Lecture', also, twice a week, at Milk Street (Mr Vincent's Church) – a lecture set up and sustained by 'Mr Ashhurst with about twenty other citizens'. For this, which he 'continued near a year', he received £40; but for preaching at Blackfriars he would take nothing. Further, he obtained a Licence from Sheldon Bishop of London to preach at large in his diocese[2] and did not scruple to subscribe his 'promise not to preach against the Doctrine of the Church, or the ceremonies established by law'. There is no need to say that all this was before May 19, 1662, when the Uniformity Act became Law. His consequent Action was immediate; and gave a signal to the whole land. For on May 22 at Blackfriars he was the first to declare his dissent and preach his farewell sermon.[3] As our subject is Baxter, we have no occasion now to recite the well-known story of the great ejectment; but there are two interesting facts about him which remain to be mentioned. One is that, at one time, he had serious thought of emigrating. Just when this was he does not say, but it must have been not long after the 'Conference' fiasco. 'I was somewhat wearied' – he says – 'with this kind of life – to be every day calumniated and hear new slanders raised of me, and court and country ringing of that which no man mentioned to my face; and I was oft thinking to go beyond the sea that I might find some place in retired privacy to live and end my days in quietness out of the noise of a Peace-hating Generation'. But there were impediments some of which he mentions and some not; and I feel sure that the chief of these was one which presently rendered him well content to stay at home even at the cost of slanders and worse.[1] This brings us to the second fact. In Sweetings Alley, the later Aldersgate Street, was the home of Mrs Charlton (Harmer) and her daughter, Margaret, who had come up to London very soon after Baxter. The Mother had removed to Kidderminster 'from her ancient habitation at Appley in Shropshire[2] about January 1657 and was joined by her daughter a year or so later. Mrs Charlton came, in spite of Baxter's dissuasion, on purpose to be under his ministry, and occupied a large house overlooking the Churchyard. Margaret had no choice but to join her Mother, and did so in rather a rebellious spirit. Compared with Oxford, where she had been staying with her elder sister,[3] she found the dirty little town intolerably dull.

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[1] The greater part, at least, of four books was written between 1660–3.

[2] The Parchment original of this license dated February 25, 1660–1, is among the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, f. 399.

[3] 'The last sermon which I preached publickly was at Black Fryars on this text Colossians ii. 6, 7.

But this mood soon passed. The spell of Baxter's preaching and personality fell upon her. She became his silent, yet most ardent, devotee. When he left for London it is more than possible that the proposal to break up the home and follow him was hers – however readily adopted by her mother. What Baxter felt, there is little or nothing to show, but such hints as can be gathered from one or two letters point to a total absence of passion on his part. He was too absorbed in his 'Pacificatory' labours to have room for much thought, or feeling, about any merely personal interest. Yet one cannot help imagining that he and Margaret must have met sometimes at her Mother's house, or at places where he preached; and that her vivid sympathy must have helped him. Her Mother's death at the end of 1661 must have drawn them together still more closely: for her mother had entered more and more deeply into her life, and left behind a great void. Indeed, it was about this time that their connection attracted notice, and excited comment, and set the wits talking at Court. 'It was famed' – he says – 'that I was married'. 'Bishop Morley divulged the news with all the odium he could possibly put upon it'. 'It everywhere rung about partly as a wonder, and partly as a crime'. At last the Lord Chancellor questioned him on the subject and learnt that it was not true. For they had affirmed it near a year before it came to pass. 'And I think the King's Marriage was scarce more talked of then mine'. This surely was the dear 'impediment' which kept him at home.

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[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 384. It is significant that he mentions his marriage in the next paragraph to that about emigration. The law of association was at work.

[2] Apley Castle, nr. Wellington.

[3] Mrs Upton, wife of Rev Ambrose Upton, Canon of Christ Church.

They were married on September 10, 1662, 'in Bennet Fink Church by Mr Samuel Clark, having before been contracted by Mr Simeon Ash both in the presence of Mr Henry Ashhurst and Mrs Ash'.[1] Baxter's comment in 1681 just after Margaret's death is enough. 'When we were married her sadness and melancholy vanished: counsel did something to it and contentment something; and being taken up with our household affairs did somewhat. And we lived in inviolated love and mutual complacency, sensible of the benefit of mutual help'. Their home for nine months was in Moorfields. In July 1663 they transferred their residence to Acton in Middlesex.

'Having lived three years and more in London' – so he writes – 'and finding it neither agree with my health or studies (the one being brought very low and the other interrupted) and all publick service being at an end, I betook myself to live in the country . . . that I might set myself to writing and do what service I could for posterity, and live as much as possibly I could out of the world'. Here, for the present, we will leave him.

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[1] The marriage licence was issued on April 29, 1662, to 'Richard Baxter of St Botolph's, Aldersgate, London, Clerk, aged about 48' (Cambridge University Library 7450, d. 21). This may be the date of the contract here referred to.

For fuller particulars, see 'A Puritan Idyll, or Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story,' by the present writer (Ryland's Library Bulletin, vol. IV., 1918).

PART TWO

BAXTER'S CONTROVERSIES

Most of these fell between 1650–60 and so within our period. They are not a mirror of Baxter at his best, but neither do they reveal much to his discredit, and they need to be known if we wish to form a fair idea of his character and a just estimate of his principles. He waived controversy as much as possible in the pulpit; and took up no matter of controversy in the press, unless it was acknowledged to be, or he believed it to be, of fundamental importance.

The exception to this rule was his first – that on Baptism; and he complained bitterly that it was forced upon him. The second, on Antinomianism, involved the very life of religion. The third, on Quakerism, concerned the truth or falsehood of historic Christianity. The fourth, on the Papacy, had to do with issues which seemed to threaten life or death to the State as well as the Church. The fifth, on Prelacy and Separatism, touched him to the quick because of its intimate connection with the Unity and Peace of the Church.

There were many smaller issues – linked up with these larger ones – which he could not avoid, and upon which (it must be owned) he wasted a good deal more ink than they deserved. For whatever he might say to the contrary, he was attracted by the controversial arena; and delighted in the skilful use of its weapons, which came so easily to him. But he often checked himself, and did so effectually in his later years. Even then, however, and to the last, the themes just named – that of Baptism excepted – retained an importance in his eyes which could always rally him to a defence of what he held to be the truth about them.

As prelude to all his controversies we may quote the following from his narrative of the first. It strikes a note which he repeats over and over again.

'I can truly say, and without vanity, that the chiefest study of my Life is the Churches peace; and that all the controversial writings which I have written, or am about, are all to take men off from extreams, and bring them to Peace. And that to my best remembrance, I never fell out with one man in City or Country, Army or Garrison since I was a Minister of the Gospel; and that I bear no ill will to anyone on earth, nor do I know any man that is an enemy to me, except in general, in reference to National or Religious disagreements'.

Thus Baxter wrote in July 1650; but at the same time he wrote: 'My Judgment tells me, without any doubting, that Peace-breakers, and dividers of the Church especially – that violently and resolvedly go on in that practise – should not have the same language as others. My endeavours are for the peace of the place where I live; therefore, if I abuse any, or if I do not part with my own right and suffer wrong for peace, I deserve to be blamed; but if there be one in the Town that will spit in everyman's face that he meets, or will fall upon them or beat them, or will set the Town on fire, must I bear with this man for peace? Must I let him alone to do all the Mischief he can, and say, I suffer him for peace?' The man he had in mind was Rev John Tombes, B.D., his neighbour of Bewdley. He loved peace but even peace may have to be subordinated to something else. There were, however, two things which Baxter did not sufficiently remember –

(1) That he might sometimes be mistaken; or not quite so entirely in the right as he supposed. 'How mean soever my own Abilities were, yet it had still' (i.e. always) 'the advantage of a good Cause' (*R.B.*, I, p. 88).

(2) That the cause of peace may owe not a little to the way in which the 'good cause' is maintained. He was aware of this, to some extent, even so early as 1650. 'I confess my stile in writing doth taste of the natural keenness, and eagerness and seriousness of my disposition; wherein I am jealous that I may easily miscarry'. By 1665 it had come home to him as a matter of 'penitent Confession'. 'I am too much inclined to such *words* in controversial writings which are *too* keen, and apt to provoke the Person whom I write against' (*R.B.*, I, p. 137).

We shall see that his language to, and about, Mr Tombes went beyond mere 'keenness'. Its substance and its tone alike were bad. They almost suggest in places, that popular success, combined with a just sense of his own abilities, had turned his head. But, if so, he soon came to himself. One of his charming qualities was an instant readiness to acknowledge wrong-doing on his part, as soon as he saw it. So it turned out in the case of Mr Tombes. Writing to Mrs Lambe, the wife of a Baptist, on August 22, 1658, he adds the postscript. 'If Mr L look into my Book for Infant Baptism, let him know that I much repent of the harsh language in it, but not of the main matter' (*R.B.*, Appendix III, p. 58).[1]

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[1] For a fuller and very striking exposition (too long to quote) of his mind about 'Controversy' and his own part in it, see 'the Preface Apologetical' to '*Richard Baxter's Acconnt . . to . . T. Blake of the Reasons of his Dissent . .* 1654' (written *Kederminster*, August 1, 1653).

I

CONTROVERSY WITH REV JOHN TOMBES B.D. OF BEWDLEY ON BAPTISM

According to Baxter, Tombes (1603? – 1676) was 'reputed the most learned and able Anabaptist in England'.

Born of humble parentage at Bewdley, he had worked his way up to distinction alike as scholar and preacher. In January 1618, at the age of 15, he entered Magdalen Hall, Oxford; in June 1621 he graduated B.A.; and M.A. in April 1624. In June 1631 he commenced B.D. Before this date – November 1630 – he became Vicar of Leominster. Compelled to leave, by the violence of the King's party at the end of 1642, after 'much wandring up and down', he preached for 'half a year' at All Saints', Bristol. It was not till then that he reached the point of thoroughly doubting the lawfulness of Infant Baptism. On the surrender of Bristol to the Royalists he set out for London but was driven from the direct route through Wiltshire by what he calls the 'sad and unexpected overthrow at Devizes'.[1] So he went by sea to Pembrokeshire, his wife and children joining him later with great difficulty. Finally, he got away just in time to escape arrest by the King's forces; and arrived in the Thames on September 22. Acting on the advice of his father-in-law (Rev Henry Scudder[2]), he submitted his case to a Committee of the Westminster Assembly, or some of its members, between February and July 1644 – by whom his papers were 'tossed up and down' from one to another – falling at length into the hands of Thomas Edwards (1599–1647),[3] 'the Controversies Lecturer at Christchurch' who 'meerly abused' him from the pulpit. Meanwhile, the parishioners of Fenchurch for whom Tombes was officiating (at St Gabriel's) became disaffected and refused to hear him – though he said nothing about Baptizing in his sermons. By the end of the year they had withdrawn his maintenance and he was brought to 'great straights'. But in the end of January 1645, 'after a triall of three Lords Daies', he was chosen by 'the Honorable Societies of the Temple' 'to be their Preacher for a year'. His appointment was the result of a compromise. He undertook, not to preach against the baptizing of Infants in his own Pulpit, unless some one else should preach for it in the same place. The Rev Stephen Marshall, the Assembly's representative, whose recommendation had secured, or at least assisted, his election, said he undertook, further, not to preach or write on the subject at all; and, consequently, was very angry when Tombes published *Two Treatises and an Appendix . . . concerning Infant Baptism* in December.

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[1] i.e. Waller's overthrow at Roundway Down (July 13).

While at Leominster he baptized infants 'upon the warrant' of 1 Corinthians vii. 14 'only'. At Bristol he met an Antipædobaptist who loosened his hold on that text. In Wales he almost let it go; and by January 1643–4 the date of his first dispute with the London Ministers, he had parted with it entirely (*An Apology or Plea for the Two Treatises . . .* pp. 6, 7, 1646).

[2] d. 1659. Member of the Westminster Assembly and author of the *Christian's Daily Walke in Holy Securitie and Peace*. That Tombes was his son-in-law is not mentioned in the *D. N. B.*

[3] Author of *Gangræna* [1646].

He charged him with 'a restless spirit' and 'a mind to increase the Divisions and Confusions of the time'. Tombes' plea, that he had not promised an unconditional silence; and that he had been moved simply by a desire to check the threatened issue of an Ordinance by Parliament to enforce the Directory and make 'the not reading it penall', found no credence either with Marshall or other leading men. So, in the course of 1646[1] he had to leave the Temple, and look out for something else.

This brings Baxter on the scene. He had met Tombes in London early in 1644 – no doubt whilst he was 'under the cure of Sir Theodore Mayern' between his first and second residence at Coventry (*R.B.*, I, p. 45). For he writes (1650): 'The first time that ever I had a word with Mr Tombes about Infant Baptism was about five or six years ago, when he accidentally came into my quarters at the house of my most intire and dear friend Col Sylvanus Taylor in London, and there did I urge Mr Tombes with this one Argument and none but this' – the Argument, namely, from Infants Church-membership. 'And afterwards I was forced to preach on the subject at *Coventry*'.[1] Baxter's first acquaintance with the Anabaptists was at Gloucester (July 1642). He had only heard of them before; and here they consisted of no more than 'about a dozen young men or more of considerable parts' whom Mr Winnel, the Minister of the place, treated (he thought) too impatiently. His own views at that time were unsettled. In fact, he was inclined to attach but little importance to the question. His whole soul was bent on conversions. If he felt any positive leaning, it was *not* towards Infant Baptism. For this reason, he refused to baptize Infants. He baptized two at Bridgnorth when he first went there, but no more. Nor did he, in his first period, baptize any at Kidderminster. Nay, the reason why he 'durst not adventure upon a full pastorall charge but to preach only as a Lecturer' was his state of mental suspense about Baptism – and (strange to say) 'about the other Sacrament'. Apparently, he had cleared his mind by the time he met Mr Tombes – so far as to be convinced that the children of true believers enjoy their parents' 'Right to the Pardon of Original Sin and to Adoption and to Heaven; which Right is by Baptism to be sealed and delivered to them'.

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[1] However, not before August 20 when he wrote 'from my study at the Temple in London' and deplores having to 'leave so intelligent an Auditory with so much advantage of the fruit of my Labours'.

It was along this line that he opposed the Anabaptists at Coventry. Thereupon they 'sent to *Bedford* for one Mr *Benjamin Coxe*, an old[2] Anabaptist Minister, and no contemptible Scholar, the son of a Bishop; and he and I had first a dispute by Word of Mouth and after by Writing; and his Surceasing gave me ease'.[3] Mr Coxe was 'desired to depart, which he did; but coming back without leave was imprisoned. In answer to some who said the Committee acted at Baxter's instance he declared that, on the contrary, what he did was to speak for his release. It is true, however, that Mr Coxe seems to have been the first to fill him with strong dislike of the exclusive and disruptive doctrine taught by *some* of the

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[1] *Plain Scripture Truth of Infant Church-membership and Baptism* (p. 210). In the Preface Baxter says he had 'greedily read over Tombes' *Examen and Exhortation* a little before'. And his finding the '*Champion* of the Cause' so weak, strengthened him on the other side.

[2] See Article in *D. N. B.*

[3] *R.B.*, I, pp. 46, 109, 41.

Baptists. He was already (1644) a zealot for Christian Unity; and that men should not shrink from splitting such Unity, in the name of a mere circumstance like the mode and meaning of Baptism seemed to him monstrous. It seemed to him monstrous in 1644 and it seemed the same in 1675 when he wrote as follows:

'There are two sorts of men called Anabaptists among us: The one sort are sober Godly Christians, who when they are rebaptized to satisfie their consciences, live among us in Christian Love and peace; and I shall be ashamed if I love not them as heartily, and own them not as peaceably, as any of them shall do either me or better men than I, that differ from them. The other sort hold it unlawful to hold communion with such as are not of their mind and way, and are schismatically troublesome and unquiet, in labouring to increase their Party. These are they that offend me, and other lovers of peace.[1]

How Tombes came to Bewdley, after the loss of his position at the Temple, is told by Baxter in a passage which has all the marks of truth. 'When the Wars were ended' (i.e. the first Civil War) 'and I returned home to visit my friends, the people of Bewdley were destitute of a Preacher for their Chapel, and Mr William Hopkins (now with Christ)[2] came to me to ask my advice therein; telling me they were motioned to Mr Geree and Mr Tombes, but the latter he was scrupulous about, because he was against Infant Baptism. My answer was that I judged Mr Tombes a pious able Man; and though he were against Infant Baptism, yet being Orthodox in all things else (as I then thought he was) and the point but small, and I hoped he was a peaceable temperate man, I was persuaded it would remain but as a difference of Opinion, and that he would not make any disturbance about it, nor (as the ignorant sort of them do) labour to propagate his Opinion, and to make parties and divisions among the people: which, I told him, I the rather believed, in that I had heard that he had promised in London to be silent on that point, except any came into his place'[3] (the

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[1] More proofs of Infants Church-membership . . . 1675. . . . Preface. . . .

[2] He died July 19, 1647.

[3] Evidently Baxter had not yet heard that for the alleged breach of his promise Tombes was out of a 'place'.

Temple) 'to Preach against him, and, therefore, I doubted not but he would do so with them; and that his parts and piety would be more advantageous to them than his difference of Opinion (thus silenced by temperance) would be hurtfull'. So, partly through Baxter's testimonial, Tombes, by the end of 1646, was chosen Lecturer at Bewdley, as Baxter at Kidderminster, by a Committee representative of the parish.[1] Baxter's later comment is: 'This was the greatest wrong that ever I knew I did to Bewdley'.

At first all went well. 'When I was returned home I more rejoyced in Mr Tombes' neighbourhood and made more of it, than of most of others'. The two seem often to have walked and talked together. There was an occasional exchange of pulpits between them; and Mr Tombes became a regular attender of Baxter's Thursday lecture. But Baxter did not, and would not, touch on the baptist question. On the other hand, as time passed, Tombes began to press his 'difference' with increasing persistency and to speak as if he thought it sinful cowardice to hide his light. 'I perceived,' says Baxter, 'that my constant speech for Peace was interpreted as if I were loth to own the truth for fear of breaking Peace'. When he admitted that essential truths must be asserted at any cost of peace; but maintained that Baptism was not such a truth, Tombes denied this.

Baxter implies that Tombes took counsel of prudence until the 'times were changed' i.e. until the Army rose to power. Then he 'began to open himself fully in the congregation'; and to inveigh against Infant Baptism as Heresy; and 'to charge it so sharply on their conscience that poor people were much troubled'. His success was not encouraging. Ultimately he gathered 'about twenty disciples' to whom he ministered while still preaching at St Anne's. It was (says Baxter) a matter of common fame that they were rebaptized by 'dipping over head in cold water';[1] and that some at any rate were dipped 'naked'.[2]

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[1] The Parish was Ribbesford and Mr Boraston was Vicar (1641–60) who took the side of Baxter, and for whom the latter had some respect. Tombes seems to have accused him of being first for the King and then for the Parliament – unjustly, as Baxter thought. (*Plain Scripture Proof*, p. 376, (4th ed.)). He was one of the first to subscribe the Worcestershire Agreement (1653).

At last Baxter had to break silence. For not only was he importuned to do so by 'the Bailiff and Minister and divers inhabitants of Bewdley', but even more by some of his own people who were tempted to wonder if Baxter might not himself be a Baptist at heart. Hence he wrote to Tombes and (as one of five alternatives) proposed a public debate.[3] After some delay, and with evident reluctance, Tombes consented; and the debate came off 'in Mr Tombes' Chapel' on January 1, 1650.

It excited immense local interest. Large contingents from Kidderminster and other parts flowed in to swell the stream of people on the spot. The congregation amounted to 'thousands' including some thirty Ministers and Scholars – a sign that news of the meeting had travelled far and wide. The proceedings lasted the whole day, or from dawn till dark; and Baxter according to his own account[4] surprised himself. Before the day his 'extream weakness of body' and nervous apprehensions threatened a breakdown. He daily prayed the Lord, as heartily as he could, to make him sure and clear as to his position. In short, 'nothing but necessity and love of Truth could have forced me to it'. But, 'When the time came, though I was extreamly ill the day before, *God* enabled me to speak from betwixt nine and ten on till after four, when at no other time I am able to speak well above an hour.[5] Yea, I was better a fortnight after it than of long time. This Providence I knew was an answer to my prayers; and so was the success of that day's dispute.' There is no doubt that Baxter achieved, at any rate, a popular triumph. He was in his own person the more popular man; his style of address was more popular by far; and he was defending the more popular cause: for Baptists had not yet succeeded in dissociating themselves from their namesakes of Munster.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 134. Baxter calls this (in *our* climate) a breach of the sixth commandment. It is interesting to read that his own mode of Baptizing was not by sprinkling but pouring.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 136. He calls this a breach of the seventh commandment.

[3] Writing in 1681 Baxter says, 'Though Mr Tombes and I differed in the doctrine of Infant Baptism, I gave him leave . . . in the publick Church, many hours together, to say all that' he 'could for' his 'opinions in the hearing of my Auditors . . .' (*A Second Defence of the Nonconformists against . . . Dr Edward Sullingfleet, Dean of St. Pauls*, p. 71.) This must have taken place before the debate. On the same page he says, 'A considerable part of *Kiderminster* Parish called Ridnal (Wribbenhall?) being at *Bewdley Bridge* end, and two miles from *Kiderminster* (and some Villages more) were usually Mr *Tombes* his hearers at *Bewdley*, and I never blamed them'.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 166. A 'variant' of this is in the Introduction to the same book.

[5] Had he forgotten what he did at Agmondesham in 1646? (*R.B.*, I, p. 56). He cannot have been actually speaking all this time if (as he says in

Tombes seems to have felt that the odds were against him. In writing of the scene afterwards he speaks of having found himself unable to say all that he could have said; and of his care 'to speak no more than was necessary'; and of 'a natural hesitancy in answering an argument at the first hearing'. The impression is given that he was borne down by the volubility [2] of the younger man (twelve years younger). He complains of disrespectful remarks flung at him by Baxter in his heat. He more than hints that the meeting 'was packed to cry up a Baxter, as if they had been a company of boys at a game'. In order, therefore, to redress the balance Tombes delivered a sermon at 'Bewdley Chappell' on January 20 in which he presented his arguments in a systematic form.

The effect was not what he hoped. He discovered very soon that his footing at Bewdley was gone. His 'dearly beloved Auditors – Magistrates and People' (to whom he dedicated the sermon) were finally turned against him. He had to leave; and his next book – dated May 22, 1650 – is subscribed from 'your truly loving countryman and *late* Teacher'.

This book was entitled '*An Antidote against the Venome of a paragraph in the fifth direction of the Epistle dedicatory to the Saints Everlasting Rest*'. That epistle was written within a week of the debate (its date is January 5) and the offensive passage in the fifth section is as follows:

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another place – *Ibid.*, p. 206) Tombes 'took up far the greatest part of the time'.

[1] There are two entries in St Anna's church-book which recall the excitement of the occasion: 'a quart of sack for Mr Tombes', and, 'To Weaver, for mending the seats and other worke done in the Chappell at the dispute' (Burton's *History of Bewdley*, Appendix, p. 32).

[2] 'A nimble wit and a voluble tongue, though shallow in Judgment, may do much before silly people, – was his tart comment (*ibid.*, p. 210).

'Separation comes from Pride and Ignorance, and directly leads to the dissolution of all Churches. That Independency which gives the people to govern by vote is the same thing in another name. Anabaptists play the Divel's part in accusing their own children, and disputing them out of the Church and Covenant of Christ; and affirming them to be no Disciples, no Servants of God, nor holy, as separated to him . . . I cannot digress to fortifie you against these Sects. You have seen God speak against them by Judgments from Heaven. What were the two Monsters in New England but miracles? Christ hath told you, By their fruits ye shall know them. We misinterpret when we say he means by fruit their doctrine: that were but *idem par idem*. Heretikes may seem holy for a little while, but at last all false doctrines likely end in wicked lives. Where hath there been known a society of Anabaptists, since the world first knew them, that proved not wicked? How many of these, or Antinomists etc, have you known who have not proved palpably guiltie of lying, perfidiousness, covetousness, malice, contempt of their godly Brethren, licentiousness or seared consciences? They have confident expressions to shake poor ignorant souls, whom God will have discovered in the day of trial; but when they meet with any that can search out their fallacies how little have they to say? You know I have had as much opportunitie to try their strength as most; and I never yet met any in Garison or Army that could say anything which might stagger a solid man. You heard in the late publike dispute at Bewdley (January 1) with Mr Tombes, who is taken to be the ablest of them in the Land, and one of the most moderate, how little they can say even in the hardest point of Baptism; what gross absurdities they are driven to; and how little tender Conscientious fear of erring is left among the best'.[1] This certainly suggests that Baptists were heretics against whom God's Judgments had manifestly gone forth; that their heresy led to an Antinomian or evil life; and that it had nothing solid to say for itself. Tombes might reasonably call such a passage venomous. In particular, the reference to 'The Two Monsters in New England' was cruel. For the two Monsters were associated with two women – Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer

[1] *Saints' Rest*, § 5, Introduction of 1st edition.

– concerning whom a horrible story had been circulated to the effect that, as a miraculous sign of Divine displeasure, they had brought forth monstrous births.[1]

Baxter was naturally credulous of such reports if attested, as this was, by 'sober and godly Ministers'. He not only believed it but was so sure of its exceptionally judicial purpose that he could not bear any questioning of it. Yet in fact the story did not contain even the proverbial grain of truth. Moreover, the two women were really two saintly souls[2] whose only crime lay in fidelity to a light from heaven which led them outside the narrow fold of New England Puritan theology – the narrowest and hardest of all theologies then extant.

But Baxter, taking the charges against them (under eighty-two heads) at their face value, took also what was said to have befallen them as a meet punishment. This in itself was bad enough; but the sting for Tombes lay in the implication that he and his sympathizers, because belonging to the same Antinomian species, were provoking a like fate. No wonder he was angry and sat down at once to compose an 'Antidote'.

It is remarkable, however, that he as little questioned the truth of the New England Story as did Baxter. All he tried to do was to turn the point of it:

'It is very unsafe for any man to Judge of Doctrine by such accidentall strange things'. And he instanced the story of St Dunstan who, 'a little before the Conquest', convened a Synod 'at Caw in Wiltshire' to determine the question whether married Priests or Monks 'were more acceptable to God'. 'The party that held for married Priests sate on one side of the room', and 'the party that were for monks sate on the other'. Then in course of the dispute, it 'happened that part of the House' on the side of those who were for married priests 'fell down, and many were hurt and many lost their lives'. So it was at once 'concluded that God was better pleased with Monks than married Priests'.[1] Did Baxter agree? By no means. For the accidental falling of a house at a critical moment was not a miracle. But the New England event *was* a miracle, and of such a character that to dispute against it came near to sinning against the Holy Ghost. Its miraculousness, it appears, lay in its peculiar monstrosity and incidence. 'If it were no Miracle for Mistris *Dyer* and Mistris Hutchinson to bring forth these Monsters, yet to fall out on the leading sectaries and not on one only, but both, and that in such a time when the Church was in perplexity, because of those controversies; and for one to have such variety of births, and the other a monster with such variety of parts suitable to their various monstrous opinions, these are so evidently the hand of God that he that will not see it when it is lifted up, shall see and be ashamed'. 'And I hope Mr T his tongue will sooner cleave to the roof of his mouth, than these wonders of Providence shall be forgotten by New England'.[2]

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[1] Thomas Weld (1590?–1662) – Minister at Roxbury, Massachusetts (1632–41) and afterwards (1649 till his death) at St Mary's Gateshead – was its sponsor. For he edited, endorsed, and commended the book where it occurs – which was issued in 1644 under the title *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines that Infested the Churches of New England.*

[2] See an account of them and their opinions in *Quakers in the American Colonies* (1920) edited by Dr Rufus Jones. It does not condescend even to notice the story, and simply hints at what may have been (in Weld's mind) the germ of it (note, p. 25). After Anne Hutchinson's excommunication by the Boston Church, she was condemned to a semi-imprisonment in Mr Weld's house at Roxbury, and beset by Clerical inquisition; and underwent a great deal of mental depression. 'It is important to note her physical condition. She was soon to give birth to a child'.

Tombes drew attention to the fact that, granted the miracle and its moral, there was little or nothing to connect it with Anabaptism.

'I have' he says 'read over the eighty-two errors that were condemned in an Assembly in the Church of New England at New Town, August 30, 1637, and of these eighty-two errors, there is not one of them that doth in the least manner hint that these persons did hold the doctrine of denying Infant-Baptism . . . there are twenty-nine Doctrines of Mrs Hutchinson but none of them against Baptism of Infants'. Baxter's answer to this was that some at least of Mrs Hutchinson's followers or sympathizers 'were against Baptism', and that there was something in Baptist teaching which tended straight to Antinomian laxity. Did Baxter then mean to make a charge of such laxity against Tombes himself? The latter thought so: for 'I am the only man that is here named in this passage'.

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[1] *Plain Scripture Truth* . . . p. 189.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 198. Baxter held by his faith to the last. Writing in January, 1689, he says, 'I have said oft and long ago that I cannot be so hardened against God's miraculous judgments in New England on Mrs Dyer, etc . . .' as to doubt them.

Baxter's reply went from bad to worse.

First, he disowns any conscious purpose (when he wrote) so to charge him; but then, if Tombes will have his honest opinion, candidly stated, it is this – that he has exhibited more than a trace of all the faults mentioned in that passage.[1]

Thus did Baxter permit himself to traduce a man twelve years his senior and one whose Christian character was not a whit behind his own; and yet at the same time he could say that Mr Tombes was one whom he 'loved and honoured' unfeignedly. Why then this scurrility? What in Baxter's mind, was its justification? Well, merely, it seems, his indignation at a wantonly broken peace.

'The Lord that is searcher of my heart knows that if he would be a friend to the peace of the Church, and live quietly, without making parties and schisms (when we are so deeply wounded by our divisions already) I could, for all his opinions, live as lovingly with him and take as much content in his society as in most mens in these parts, as I did as long as he *so* lived near me'. Of course, he wrote sincerely. Tombes, after all the warnings addressed to him, did strike Baxter as a wanton disturber of the peace, with whom he did well to be angry. But there were impure elements in his anger which made it too much like the false zeal he was so apt to deprecate. And, at the time, he was not aware of this. Meanwhile, Tombes felt more of the fire than the dove in Baxter's attitude – and was correspondingly incensed. He thought it did not become a Christian to 'go about as it were, to paradigmatize and stigmatize me throughout the whole Kingdom'; nor did he understand why Baxter, laying aside 'all these kind of bitter expressions', should not be content to debate the difference between them fairly and calmly. According to Tombes he would not do this. He was brow-beating, scornful, bitter; and continued to be so when the first heat of the dispute had, for himself, died away. Referring to several letters which passed between them four years later – April 3 to 21, 1655, – when Tombes was on a visit to Bewdley, he says there is no 'relenting' in Mr Baxter. The year following (May 4, 1656) the same spirit led Baxter in a sermon at Bewdley to back up those who opposed Tombes' preaching there; and the same spirit (says Tombes) appears in his 'book of conversion' (1657).[1]

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[1] 'Lying, perfidiousness, covetousness, malice, contempt of godly brethren, licentiousness, a seared conscience'. The long passage (*ibid.*, pp. 202–4) devoted to this calumny is mostly Rhetoric and not to be taken literally. Tombes' 'licentiousness' e.g. consisted merely in his alleged laxity towards the Sabbath. In fact, covetousness was the one charge for which Baxter had anything plausible to say. Tombes, he says, was a Pluralist: 'Parson of Ross, Vicar of Leominster, Preacher of Bewdley and Master of the Hospital at Ledbury'. Tombes replied to the charge in his *Præcursor*, but not very convincingly. Baxter's rejoinder simply appeals to the facts which could not be denied. He adds one new point. Tombes had said he got nothing from Leominster. That may be so, says Baxter, 'and did I not tell you that a reverend Minister told me that they offered you £60 to quit the title, that they might put in another and you would not? And you did not deny it'? (*Ibid.*, p. 379.)

In this way perhaps, since Tombes was in great esteem among the Baptists, Baxter won a reputation which rendered him an object of their special dislike, nor did he succeed in removing it – to any large extent – by his proposals of 1659 (which reveal a splendid Catholicity) for Communion with them – as may be seen, for example, from a book by H. Danvers[2] (1674) which slanders Baxter and his books in a manner not unworthy of Gangrene Edwards. Nevertheless, in July 1659, Tombes sought from him a letter of commendation to his new book entitled *Romanism Discussed*; and was not repelled. On the contrary Baxter was glad to have an opportunity of demonstrating that, despite their disagreement about Baptism, they were united 'against the Common adversary and for the common cause'.

The Book, accordingly, appeared with Baxter's Preface on November 30, 1660.[3]

There is no trace of any personal intercourse or contact with

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[1] *Antipædo-baptism* . . . (1657), 3rd Pt., p. 69.

[2] Died 1687 (see *D. N. B.*).

[3] Tombes, diffident of himself, left his MS. at the house of Mr William Allen (a fellow Baptist and a friend of Baxter's), London, July 12, 1659, with a message begging for his mediation. Baxter answered Allen's letter at once (July 18) and said he was willing to do what was asked but, first of all, wanted Allen's advice – particularly as to 'a great scandal' raised against Tombes by Colonel

Tombes on Baxter's part after 1656 (at Bewdley). The one at Leominster, the other at Kidderminster, lived and worked till both were thrust into Nonconformity by the Restoration. After 1661 Tombes lived at Salisbury – where his (second) wife had property. He seems to have held by his Baptist views to the last, though his last writing on the subject was not later than 1659.[1] Much to the offence of his stricter brethren he kept up communion with the Church – like Baxter; and met with much the same treatment. He died on May 22, 1676.

There is no doubt that the 'dapper little man' (as Anthony à Wood calls him) had the advantage of Baxter in calmness and courtesy, whatever may be thought about the merits of the argument. Baxter too often lost his self-control, even if he won his cause. But his was the sort of noble nature that is rapidly made wiser by its mistakes.

P.S. or Note.

The book of Baxter's which I have quoted from was mostly written by July 1650 and entirely by November (1st Edition). It presents every side of the case from his standpoint; and answers Tombes' *Valedictory oration* and *Antidote*, etc., *seriatim*. He also deals with Mr Thomas Bedford; and, in the third edition, with Tombes' *Præcursor* (1652). The style of the book is extraordinarily pungent, and its biographical items are very interesting. In one place, e.g. (p. 378, 4th Ed.) he speaks of having had nothing to lose (apparently when the Puritans were plundered by the Royalists and the rabble in 1642) 'but Books and a Horse, which were lost', 'save for a part of the books'; and he goes on 'where you tell me of a good estate in land that I am heir to, I must tell you that I am nothing the richer for that, nor desire to be. Indeed, Sir, my £100 per annum is much more (for all my very chargeable weakness) than I know what to do with for myself; and had I not better ways to expend some of it, I should desire to rid my hands of it all'. He is warding off an insinuation of covetousness, as a *tuquoque*, from Tombes.

Clieve. He had known of it for years but had kept it to himself. Lately, however, the Colonel had made it public. Had Allen heard of it; and, if so, what should be its influence on Baxter's decision? Yes – replied Allen – I have heard of it; and 'am troubled that so little hath been done by himself towards his own vindication, unless more hath been done than hath come to my knowledge'. All the same, his book 'may receive your countenance and attestation, if it deserveth it, without concerning yourself in his morals' (*Richard Baxter*, Appendix iv, pp. 90–3).

[1] '*A short catechism about Baptism*'.

2

ANTINOMIAN CONTROVERSY

What Baxter called 'the way of the Libertines', or, the moral laxity excused and even sanctioned by an abuse of the doctrine of Free Grace was the error which distressed him more than any other.

With regard to those whose teaching seemed to encourage it he said: 'I confess I a man unreconcileable enemy to their doctrines, and so let them take me. I had as leive tell them so as hide it. The more I pray God to illuminate me in these things, the more I am animated against them. The more I search after the Truth in my studies the more I dislike them. The more I read their own Books the more do I see the Vanity of their conceits. But, above all, when I do but open the Bible I can seldom meet with a leaf that is not against them'.[1]

He first encountered them in the Army.

'When I was in the Army Antinomianism was the predominant Infection. The Books of Dr Crisp, Paul Hobson, Saltmarsh, Cradock and abundance such like, were the writings most applauded; and he was thought no spiritual Christian, but a Legalist, that savoured not of Antinomianism, which was sugared with the Title of Free Grace; and others were thought to preach the Law and not to preach Christ'.[2] This experience was decisive. It convinced him that Antinomianism was another name for Anti-Christ, which called for nothing but the sternest censure. In accordance with his rule not to discuss controversial matters in the pulpit, he did not systematically preach against it; but as soon as he began to write the *Saints' Rest* he fell upon it with his pen and presently found himself constrained to outface its error by a full statement of the truth.

The result was his first (published) book, entitled '*Aphorismes – of – Justification* – with their Explication – annexed – wherein also is opened the nature of the – Covenants, Satisfaction, Righteousness, Faith, Works etc – Published, especially for the use of the Church of *Kederminster* in Worcestershire – by their unworthy Teacher'. . . .

Its immediate occasion was a 'great difficulty' which sprang up from what he had been saying[1] about the Saint's 'Coronation' at the hands of Christ – how his crown of righteousness would be the reward of his 'welldoing', his 'overcoming', his 'harboring, visiting, feeding etc Christ in his little ones'.[2] Baxter speaks of this as 'the compleating' of 'Justification'; but the 'great difficulty' lay in reconciling it with accepted views. 'What's become of Free Grace? of Justification by Faith only? of the sole righteousness of Christ to make us accepted'? Do not 'the Papists say rightly, That we are righteous by our own personal Righteousness and good Works concur to Justification'? His answer took the form, first, of a paragraph or two, not too long for inclusion in the text; then, it lengthened to a note which he thought of putting 'in the end' of the *Saints' Rest;* finally, it grew into a 'small volume' written for the most part at Rous Lench, but finished at Kidderminster. His address 'to the Reader' at any rate (dated November 17, 1648), was written there; and, also (most likely), the Appendix of more than 100 pages, which was added – to meet 'some objections and Questions of one that perused this small Tractate before it went to the Press'.

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[1] *Confession of Faith*, p. 5.

[2] *R.B.*, I, p. 111.

A Dedicatory letter 'To the Learned, Zealous, faithfull Ministers of Jesus Christ, Mr Richard Vines, Master of Pembroke-Hall in Cambridge and Mr Anthony Burgess, Pastor of Sutton Coldfield in Warwickshire, Members of the Reverend Assembly of Divines' is dated April 9, 1649. He calls them his most dear Brethren, and gives as his reasons for choosing to prefix their names to this Paper, a desire to acknowledge them as fit censors of his doctrine, and to acquaint the world with the reverend esteem he has of them; and to show the contemners of the Ministry some examples for their confutation.

The book became at once a storm-centre.

Mr Vines wrote 'applaudingly of it' and 'Mr Burgess thought his Name engaged him to write against it.'[3] This was typical. Perhaps, no theological book of the time evoked sharper blame, or warmer praise. For the blame, Baxter owns that it was in a measure deserved – both because its language was too keen; and because he 'medled too forwardly with Dr Owen and one or two more that had written some passages too near to Antinomianism'.[1]

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[1] *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, Pt. I, chap. v, § 4.

[2] Matthew xxv. 20, 21; Revelations ii. and iii.; Matthew xxv. 34, 35.

[3] *R.B.* I, p. 107.

Owen (1616–83) was a year younger than Baxter, so that the latter could not be charged with presumption on the ground of his comparative youth; but by 1650 Owen had reached an eminence considerably above Baxter. He had preached – twice at least – before Parliament; he had accompanied Cromwell to Ireland as his Chaplain; he had been appointed preacher to the Council of State; he had gone (or was going) with Cromwell to Scotland; he was soon to be Dean of Christ Church, Oxford (March 18, 1650–1) and Vice-chancellor (1652); he was, also, an Author of Confessed authority. For Baxter, then, to criticize the great man – in a first publication – without a hint of self-distrust, did not commend his modesty to strangers; and did actually, to some of these as well as to Owen himself, convey an unfavourable impression of him which they never lost. Writing long afterwards he excused (or accused) himself thus: 'I was young, and a stranger to Mens tempers, and thought others could have born(e) a Confutation as easily as I could do myself; and I thought I was bound to do my best publickly to save the World from the hurt of published Errors, not understanding how it would provoke men more passionately to insist on what they once have said. But I have now learned to contradict Errors, and not to meddle with the Persons that maintain them. But indeed I was then too raw to be a Writer.'[2] Owen's book, which Baxter assailed, bore the Title *Salus Electorum Sanguis Jesu*, (1647–8) and his rejoinder to Baxter was entitled 'Of the death of Christ, the Price he paid, and the Purchase he made', etc (1650). Baxter met this with a silence which was taken to be an admission of defeat. 'Mr Owen' – wrote an admirer[3] 'hath invincibly proved' his thesis – viz. – that 'our Reconciliation is an immediate effect of the death of Christ'. Have it so, if you like, said Baxter, three years later. But the true reason for my silence, nevertheless, has been this:

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[1] He handles Dr Owen in the last thirty-three pages of the Appendix. The others referred to were Maccovius, and the Author of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

[2] *R.B.* I, p. 107.

[3] Mr Eyre of Salisbury.

'I so far abhorre contention and thirst after the Church's Peace that I did impose it as a penalty on myself not to answer that Book of Mr Owen's, till I saw a clear call proving it my duty, because I had been foolishly drawn to be the beginner of the Controversy. But I would not have you therefore talk of *Invincible Proof*. Were the Reverend Man and I to joyn wit to wit and learning to learning, and the contest depended on the strength of the contesters, I should easily yield that he were Invincible by such as I. But when I see what an Advantage the Truth Yields to a Weak Defender, and consider the disadvantage that he hath cast himself in that Book I must profess to you, that I take it for as easie a thing to answer it sufficiently almost as to write so much paper as that Answer will take up'.

What, then, was the truth of which Baxter felt so sure? We may draw the answer from one or two of the Aphorisms.

Thus – 'Justifying faith is the hearty accepting of Christ for our only Lord and Saviour'. – Thesis (or Aphorism) 69.

'As the accepting of Christ for Lord (which is the heart's subjection) is as essential a part of Justifying Faith as the accepting of him for our Saviour, so consequently sincere obedience (which is the effect of the former) hath as much to doe in justifying us before God as Affiance (which is the fruit of the latter)' (*Id.* 72).

The result is 'full Justification', i.e. remission of past sin through the atoning merits of Christ's death and final acceptance on the ground of an obedient life. Christ's merits are available at every step for past sin if the will is sincerely set to obey, otherwise they are vain. This, as over against the old covenant of mere works, is the new covenant of grace.

'From what hath been said, it appeareth in what sense Faith only justifieth and in what sense Works also Justify, viz. (1) Faith only justifieth as it implieth all other Parts of the condition of the New Covenant. (2) Faith only justifieth as the great Master Duty of the Gospel, to which all the rest are reducible. (3) Faith only doth not justify in Opposition to the works of the Gospel; but those Works do also Justify as the Secondary remote Parts of the Covenant'.[1]

'I know this is the doctrine that will have the loudest out-cries raised against it; and will make some cry out, *Heresie*, *Popery*, *Socianism*! and what not? For my own part the Searcher of hearts knoweth that not singularity, affectation of novelty, nor any good will to Popery, provoketh me to entertain it, but I have earnestly sought the Lord's direction upon my knees, before I durst adventure on it, and that I resisted the light of this Conclusion as long as I was able. But a man cannot force his own understanding if the evidence of truth force it not, though he may force his pen or tongue to silence or dissembling'.

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[1] This is how John Wesley reduced Theses 73 & 74 (using Baxter's own words).

One remark may be ventured on Baxter's position. He describes faith as 'the great Master duty of the Gospel to which all the rest are reducible'. He calls faith a duty, and, from what he says elsewhere – about the conditions of the New Covenant no less than the old being positive enactments, or arbitrary expressions of the will of God – we know that by a duty he means an obligation which must be obeyed because God wills it, not because faith is the natural and necessary means of relating the soul to 'God and his Christ'.

Here surely is the point where he fails. His insistence on the Moral claims of the Gospel is admirable, and was very timely. But, say what he would, they were insisted on as a standard, or ideal, toward which the Christian must ever be striving because they are commanded rather than as fruits of a life in One with whom the Christian is in vital fellowship through faith. Faith, in this Pauline sense, is something he did not apprehend. It was easy, therefore, for him to miss the truth in some of those preachers of 'free grace', to whom faith in the Pauline sense – as the organ of communion, direct and personal, between the soul and God – was the heart of religion. Baxter said, God has manifested his Grace by cancelling past sin, if you believe in the atoning merits of Christ; and will further manifest his grace by the gift of his Holy Spirit to help your infirmities, if with all your hearts you seek to obey the laws of Christ. His opponents – not all of them but the best – said, the essence of the Gospel is that 'God in Christ' has abolished the soul's merely legal relation to himself and called it to a filial relation of reverence, trust and love out of which the stream of a Christ-like life will flow as from a perennial fount. Hence the true believer, because of his inner Union with Christ, performs his duties not '*for* Life and Salvation' but '*from* Life and Salvation'. Baxter quotes this phrase as 'that dangerous pillar of the Antinomian doctrine', and so of course it might be in many cases; but those who coined it meant nothing more than Paul meant when he said 'the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'. If Baxter had been more of a mystic and possessed a deeper sympathy with Paul's mystic experience of life in Christ, he would have been a far wiser critic of so-called Antinomians like Mrs Hutchinson and Sir Harry Vane and Peter Sterry and the Quakers. As it was, the predominantly intellectual caste of his spirituality made him 'hard-grained' towards such as these – to his own serious loss.

Baxter says of this, his first book, 'it cost me more than any other that I have written; not only by men's offence but especially by putting me upon long and tedious writings'. Most of these writings were private answers to Animadversions passed upon his doctrine by other Theologians and sent by them – at his own request[1] – for consideration.

But the written controversy presently sprang to light in printed Treatises.

A large octavo volume containing one Treatise against Rev Thomas Blake, Minister of Tamworth; another against Rev George Kendall, Minister of St Benedict, Gracechurch, London; a third against Dr Ludovicus Mollinœus, History Professor at Oxford; a fourth against Rev William Eyre, Minister at Salisbury; and (last but not least) a fifth against Rev Joseph Crandon[2] – was published in 1654; and a second volume, of much more consequence, appeared a year later. This was entitled a *Confession of Faith*, in which he announced his suppression of the 'Aphorisms'; stated their doctrine more carefully; sustained it by multitudinous authorities old and new; and required all his readers to judge him by this his last and maturest word on the subject. 'If any will needs take anything in this Book to be rather a Retractation of what I before said, though I should best know my own meaning, yet do such commend me while they seem to blame me; and for my part, I never look to write that which may have no need of correction'.

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[1] The request was publicly made in 1651, near the end of his *Plain Scripture Proof* . . ., p. 345. Among those who responded were Mr John Warren, Dr John Wallis, Mr George Lawson ('the ablest man of them all') and Mr Christopher Cartwright of York.

[2] These bear dates ranging from August 1, 1653, to May 23, 1654.

The effect of his 'Confession,' together with that of his other writings on the same theme, was remarkable, if we may accept his own judgment. Writing in 1665 he says, 'This Antinomian Sect which then' (ten years before) 'so much prevailed was so suddenly almost extinct that now they little appear, and make no noise among us at all, nor have done these many years! In which effect those ungrateful Controversial Writings of my own have had so much a hand as obligeth me to very much thankfulness to God' [1].

But he was premature.

Ten years later still, he wrote that 'twenty years silence',[2] with regard to his arguments, made him think his 'Brethren pretty well satisfied; and that his labours had not been in vain'. Then, however, came to hand a work which showed that the victory was yet to win. This was a Latin treatise entitled *Justificatio Paulina sine operibus* (1674) by Dr Thomas Tully (1620–76). It was directed specially against the *Harmonia Apostolica* (1670) of Bishop Bull (1634–1710); but incidentally fell upon Baxter as represented by his 'Aphorisms' without reference to any of the 'Explications and Defences' which he had written since their first issue. This seemed to Baxter very unfair: but what better could he expect from one who dedicated his book to Bishop Morley, Baxter's inveterate adversary?

His answer was entitled *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousnesss* (1676) and consisted of two parts – the first on 'imputed Righteousness', of which the substance must have been written earlier, as the Preface is dated July 10, 1672, and has no reference to Tully; the second 'A Friendly Debate with the Learned and Worthy Mr Christopher Cartwright' (1602–58 – in fact the written debate evoked by those 'Animadversions' on his 'Aphorisms' which Baxter had requested and answered twenty-four years before. The said debate (it appears) extended from May 26 to June 18, 1652; and the Papers

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 111.

[2] 'Save somewhat of Dr Owen's'.

(after Cartwright's death) remained with Baxter, who mislaid them. By the time of Tully's appearance, however, they had been found; and are here 'All published instead of a fuller answer to' his 'assaults'.

It would seem as if the first part had been published separately: for the second is preceded by 'an answer to Dr Tullie's Angry letter' to Baxter, occasioned by the former. Finally, he devotes nine pages to something 'put forth' by Tully subsequent to the second part – 'Two sparks more quenched, which flew after the rest from the forge of Dr Thomas Tully'.

But though he might quench some sparks here and there, the fire still smouldered and flamed out from time to time. The titles of several of his writings between 1676 and 1691 are significant of this. He was never again quite free from the fear of it. Antinomianism was a spectre which haunted his thoughts to the end. And his last experience of it distressed him as much as any he had known. When in 1690 the two chief sections of Nonconformity – Presbyterian and Congregational – adopted 'Heads of Agreement' which, for practical purposes, made them one body, there was none more thankful than Baxter. It revived his hopes of a yet more comprehensive Unity in the near future. He put together what he had written in 1655 for concord between 'Moderate Independents' and Presbyterians; and what he had written in 1667 'for Concord among all true Churches and Christians' and made a book of it, which appeared in 1691 with an address[1] 'to the United Nonconformists of London' of a very cordial character. But the Happy Union did not last long. It was dissolved by the insidious working of the same old Antinomian leaven. Baxter's keen eye had already discerned the signs of its working in various quarters; and he had hastened to counter it by his *Scripture Gospel Defended, and Christ, Grace and Free Justification Vindicated against the Libertines* . . . (1690) when the new edition of the *Discourses of Thomas Crisp, D.D.* (1600–43) came to his hand. In the preface to this he found an 'invective' against himself; but what most surprised and alarmed him was to find the book sponsored by 'Twelve Reverend Names' some of them being the names of men whom he knew to be 'abhorrers' of its doctrine. It soon appeared that these, as Baxter suspected, had been used 'for a decoy'. They had not read the book or had read it carelessly; and intended only to attest their faith in the editor's trustworthiness. But the mischief was done. A breach arose among the London Ministers which nothing availed to heal. Vainly (in particular) did Baxter try, by an exhaustive review of what he and others had written against Antinomianism during thirty or forty years, 'to end such controversies, and confute rash censures and errors, and inform the ignorant.' There were few who seemed to heed him. Between the two contending parties he became as usual the target for both; and the last scene upon which he closed his eyes in December 1691 was a scene of strife about the very doctrine whereon he had once fancied himself to have uttered the decisive word.

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[1] Dated London, April 23, 1691.

Baxter did not reprint the 'Aphorisms', though he intended doing so as soon as he had found time to 'correct two or three passages and elucidate the rest'. But they were printed 'surreptitiously'; and it was perhaps a copy of one of such pirated editions (if there was more than one [1]) that a bookseller, to whom he had sent for another Tract on the same subject, sent to John Wesley. 'I had not heard' – he says – 'that there was such a book in the world – but before I had read many pages therein I saw the wise Providence of God; and soon determined (notwithstanding a few expressions which I do not altogether approve of) to reprint the substance thereof in as small a compass and at as low a Price as possible'. This he did under the Title *An Extract of Mr Richard Baxter's Aphorisms of Justification.*[2] The date of address 'to the reader' is (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) March 25, 1745, and a second edition was issued the same year. The Evangelist followed it with this prayer: 'O may he who hath so solemnly declared Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, verily I say unto you, not one Jot or one Tittle shall pass from the Law till Heaven and Earth pass away, give the same Blessing to this little Treatise now as he did near an hundred Years ago. May he once again make it a powerful Antidote against the spreading Poison of Antinomianism; and thereby save many simple unwary Souls from seeking Death in the error of their Life'.

[1] The edition in Rylands Library was printed (1655) by Abraham Brown at The Hague. This particular copy once belonged to Stepney College (1810).

[2] Published by John Wesley M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College Oxford—price 3*d.* The 'Extract' consisted of forty-five out of Baxter's eighty Theses. They are continuous, and much of the explicative matter is omitted.

3

CONTROVERSY WITH THE QUAKERS

On Sunday Morning, March 25, 1655–6, when Baxter was absent through illness, the Puritan 'sobriety' of St Mary's received a rude shock. For as soon as the Assistant Minister, Mr Sargent, had finished his sermon, a voice rang out with the challenging question 'How are the Ministers of Christ and the Ministers of AntiChrist to be known asunder', i.e. to be distinguished? When Mr Sargent, taking no notice, continued the service he was assailed by the same voice with 'Reproachful speeches'. Then, countercries from some of the 'many hundreds' present raised a hubbub which brought up the 'chief magistrate' who tried to dismiss the Assembly and succeeded, but not before the offender had flung at him 'contemptuous Speeches and gestures'. Thomas Goodaire[1] was the offender's name – one of George Fox's most zealous followers; and his outburst marked the climax of a deliberate campaign against the Ministers of the county, Baxter as 'the chiefest Priest', being chosen for the first blow. Goodaire was arrested on the spot, and on the following Tuesday was transferred from the town prison to the Castle Prison at Worcester. The 'Mittimus – given under the hands and seals' of Nicholas Pearson and Thomas Belamy – was as follows: 'In the name of his Highness the Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland and the dominions thereof', the keeper of the gaol is ordered 'forthwith to receive the said Thomas Goodaire into' his 'Custody' 'and him safely (to) keep until next General Sessions for the peace to be holden for this county and hereof not to fail as he will answer the contrary'. At the next quarter sessions in May he was released. But meanwhile, he had been visited by his colleague, Richard Farnworth; and the two had agreed upon a forward movement. This was to consist of meetings for disputation in the city and county; and especially of an intensified attack on the 'Steeple houses.' When Goodaire was free to join him in May they soon found an occasion to their mind. For Baxter was announced to lecture at Swithin's Church,[1] surely a providential 'opening'! Moreover, it turned out that his theme was the 'sad account which such would have to give who did not receive God's servants and messengers'.

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[1] He and Richard Farnworth (d. 1666) were the 'first publishers' of the new light in Worcestershire. Both were Yorkshiremen, the former from Selby and the latter from Tick Hill. They started their mission in 1655. For this and other particulars see *The First Publishers of Truth* edited by Norman Penny, pp. 274–85 – Worcestershire.

He meant of course, regular Ministers like himself – 'not knowing that some of Christ's servants and messengers were there present' . . . and . . . 'were evil-treated by him and his hearers'. So they proceeded to make him aware of their presence, with the result that Goodaire again found himself in prison.[2] In a day or two he was set at liberty on condition that he straightway left the city. But if he promised he did not perform. Instead, he went to spend the night with a friendly innkeeper whose house, on that account, was attacked by a mob 'as if they would pull it down'. Next morning he was joined (at his request) by Edward Bourne (who tells the story); and the two walked openly 'about the city', expecting and courting trouble. But to their surprise, neither the people nor 'Justice Hacker' molested them. The latter, on the contrary, was particularly civil. In fact it had been wisely decided not to make martyrs of them. So they withdrew for the moment; but 'soon after', returned and 'had meetings oft and disputes[3] oft, and went away and came againe as did many other Friends', unmolested.

Evesham however was the centre[4] of the movement. Meetings, it is said, were held there in the beginning of Oliver Cromwell's time, i.e. of his Protectorate; and gave rise to not a little suffering.

But by Cromwell's order (signed with his 'Broad Seale') there came a respite. Moreover, in order to check officious meddlers; and also, if possible, to bring the Quakers to reason, Cromwell requested the intervention of Major-General James Berry – Baxter's dearest friend of former days. Accordingly, he summoned the magistrates[1] of Evesham and some of the Friends to Worcester (March 1656).

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[1] On May 7 (Monday).

[2] Though Farnworth says 'I spoke to him in the steeplehouse in Worcester', and Baxter 'caused me to be haled out'. (*A True Testimony against the Pope's ways* . . . p. 12 (1656)).

[3] One of these (in 1656) was between George Fox and Clement Winter (Baxter's opponent) who demanded of Fox and Friends to confirm their doctrine by miracles.

[4] Other places (besides Worcester) which came to have groups of Friends were Droitwich, Bromsgrove, Dudley, Stourbridge, Shipston-on-Stour.

At this meeting Baxter was present; and there was an incident connected with it which we can understand better than Edward Bourne, the narrator. He and Berry and Baxter, 'the Priest of Kederminster', were together in a room at Worcester. They were there to discuss terms of peace, but Baxter remained silent. 'I expected' – says Bourne – 'Richard Baxter, being present in the Room with us when the Major-General and I discoursed together, would have said something, but he did not, only stood by the fireside with his Hatt over his eyes and said nothing to mee . . . .' The scene is vivid; and the Quaker's somewhat resentful surprise was natural. But if he attributed Baxter's silence to contempt for himself, I think he was at least partially mistaken; and that Berry's presence – with the sad memories it excited – had more to do with it. Let anyone read his long letter to Berry – written, in 1658, as an introduction to the *Treatise of Self-denial* – and judge for himself.

But we must go back a year or so to Kidderminster. Goodaire's outbreak in the Church, though the first open attack on Baxter, was not really the first. The first had been in the form of a pamphlet written by four Quakers,[2] as an answer to 'the Worcestershire Petition,[3] which at Baxter's instance was presented to the Rump in favour of continuing the maintenance of the Clergy by Tithes. It was entitled '*a Brief Discovery of a threefold estate of AntiChrist in the World . . . also certain queries upon a Petition lately presented to the Parliament from divers Gentlemen and others in Worcestershire etc.*'

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[1] They were commanded to liberate Friends but these were to be 'warned not to disturb the national worshippers in their worship'.

[2] Thomas Aldain, Benjamin Nicholson, John Harwood, Thomas Lawson.

[3] December 22, 1654, signed by about 6,000, of whom the majority were 'Householders and Parliamentarians – including the Mayors of Worcester and Evesham and the Bailiffs & Justices of Bewdley, Kidderminster and other places'. Very few King's men were asked to sign; and those asked, refused (*The Worcestershire Petition . . . defended*, p. 15).

Baxter replied to this – surmising but not certainly knowing its Quaker origin – in '*The Worcestershire Petition . . . for the Ministry of England, defended – by a Minister of Christ in that county . . .*[1] Which Benjamin Nicholson (one of the four) encountered with *Truth's Defence against lies – in a Brief answer to a Book entitled "the Worcestershire Petition defended"* – set forth by one of England's blind guides who calls himself a Minister of Christ, yet pleads altogether that the Friars' Abbots' Bishops' and Chapters' Lands, which the Papists set forth to maintain their idolatrous worship, are of divine right and institution; and were given to the maintaining of the Church of England which he calls the Church of Christ, and complains of the sin of sacriledge against those who have (taken), or shall take any of the aforesaid Lands or Tithes from the Clergy which he calls the Church etc . . .'

The date of this (though not given) must have been some time in 1654. Baxter, therefore, was already known to Goodaire and Farnworth when on February 21, 1654–5, they had a 'great battle' with two ministers at Chadwick nr. Bromsgrove. His fame had spread abroad among the Quakers as not only the 'chief Priest' in the county, but also as the one who had let loose the 'Monster Persecution'. For had he not at the end of his last pamphlet (p. 35) appealed to the Honourable Rulers of this Commonwealth in these and the like words – 'Is the seeking to deprive the Ministry of their lawful maintenance, no breach of the eighth Commandment? Is the reviling of the Guides of the Church, no breach of the fifth Commandment? Do you order that silly women shall be dipt over head in a Gumble-stool for scolding, and breaking the peace of the Town? And shall men have leave to print their most impudent raylings against Christ's Ministers and Churches, if they will but plead conscience for it?'

So it was natural that having (as they believed) won a 'great battle' at Chadwick the two champions should resolve to lay low the pride of Kidderminster. But, first of all, they addressed to Baxter some violently worded 'queries' by way of challenge. Their avowed purpose being to draw him into a written controversy, he took no notice. A second time, therefore, the queries were sent, accompanied by other papers, five altogether, one of which he describes as 'nothing but a bundle of filthy railing words'. Then, it would seem, he offered to meet his accusers in their own assembly, wherever that might be, if they would screen him against interruption; but they put him off with 'a sheet of futile revilings in the same language as the first', and a summons, 'in the name of the most high God', to answer the queries in writing. When he demanded to know their commission for so lofty an air they seemed to shuffle by saying, 'It is invisible'. Whereupon he again drew back into a scornful silence.

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[1] March 28, 1654.

His silence, however, was embarrassing his own people who heard of what was passing; and, also, of what Baxter himself may not have known – viz.: that his challengers were quoting his silence as an admission of weakness or fear. Hence in order to please them (if not to deliver his own soul) he produced *The Quakers Catechism or Quakers questioned . . .*

The date – at the end (i.e. the date of finishing the Pamphlet) is March 28, 1656, three days later than the disturbance in St Mary's: so that (considering the swiftness of his pen) it is quite likely to have been written in the interval.[1]

The Preface, however, is dated April 20; and the publication, therefore, may be referred to the early summer. It sold quickly if we may judge from the appearance of a second reprint before the end of the year.[2] Not less in demand was the answer to it written at once (and reprinted in 1656) by the notorious James Nayler[3] under the title – 'An Answer – to a – Book – called – "The Quakers Catechism" – put out by – Richard Baxter – wherein the slanderer is searched, his Questions – answered, and his Deceit discovered, whereby the – simple have been deceived. And the Popery proved in his own bosom, which he would cast upon the Quakers . . .'[4] Baxter summed up his case in two further 'sheets' – 'One sheet against the malignants of all sorts' (14 pp.) dated August 15, 1657; and 'a second sheet for the ministry, justifying our calling against Quakers, Seekers and Papists and all who deny us to be the Ministers of Christ' (16 pp.) dated October 23, 1657.[1]

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[1] He says it (and one or two more) were 'but one or two Days Work' (*R.B.*, I, p. 116).

[2] There was a third in 1657.

[3] He spells his name 'Nailor' in the Title-page.

[4] George Fox took a hand in the controversy – see *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore . . . unfolded . . .* (p. 233), 1659.

It must have been at some time before this – probably late in 1655 – that Baxter consented or rather invited the Quaker leaders – Thomas Goodaire in particular – to a public disputation with himself in the Church.[2] He expected no good from it, so far as Goodaire was concerned – with whom already he had spent an 'unprofitable' hour in his own house. But it might enlighten and confirm the people. Apparently it did; and it is, indeed, a notable fact that (by the Friends' own admission) the new plant never struck root in Kidderminster. Baxter is emphatic on this point. 'The Quakers would fain have got entertainment and set up a meeting in the Town (and frequently railed at me in the Congregation); but when I had once given them leave to meet in the Church for a dispute, and before the People had opened their deceits and shame, none would entertain them more, nor did they get one Proselyte among us'.[3]

Such failure may partly explain the peculiar vigour – not to say venom – of their attack on Baxter. Other Ministers in the county, though not left entirely alone,[4] escaped with one or two raids on Church or Parsonage. Not so Baxter. There was a period of some months of which he could write – 'I seldom preached a lecture but going and coming I was railed at by a Quaker in the Market Place, (or) in the way, and frequently bawled at by the name of Hireling Deceiver, False Prophet, Dog and such language'.[5]

In one of the 'five papers' mentioned above, the railers must have about exhausted their vocabulary – 'Thou serpent, Viper,

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[1] This was answered before the end of the year by Edward Burrough (1634–62) (Underbarrow, Westmoreland); and by George Whitehead (1635–1723) (Orton, Westmoreland) in 1658.

[2] P. 72, *Second True defence of the Meer Nonconformists*, 1681.

[3] *R.B.*, I, p. 88.

[4] He speaks of 'Ministers of our Country', i.e. County, who were 'most vehemently opposed' (*Richard Baxter*, Pt. I, p. 116).

[5] *Richard Baxter*, Pt. II, p. 180. On the other hand, R. Farnworth (*a True Testimony . . .?* pp. 11, 37) speaks of the fighting in the streets with clubs and fists – children howling and yelling like young brutes and throwing stones and dirt at Christians with the tacit or outspoken encouragement of parents, Ministers and even Magistrates.

Thou child of the Devil, Thou son of Perdition, thou dumb Dog, thou false Hireling, thou false Liar, Deceiver, greedy Dog, thou ravening wolf, thou cursed Hypocrite, with more of the like'. This was not quite the language that might be expected from people inspired by the Spirit of Christ; and gave Baxter some excuse for attributing it to a very different source.[1]

It is clear however that what hurt him most was not the scurrilous words, but the fierce scorn they implied of an official and paid Ministry. In their view, such a ministry meant the negation of the spiritual equality belonging alike to all true Christians. In his, it was something established by Christ himself and of a perpetual necessity for the being, the well-being, and the work of the Church. On this point he seems unable to say enough; and his resentment against those who ridiculed it 'burned like an oven'.

(1) In one place, after a paragraph to prove from the New Testament that 'the office of the Ministry is an undoubted ordinance of God to continue in the Church to the end of the world,' he takes up twenty-three paragraphs to expose the blindness or folly or wickedness of its malignant traducers. What these do is to 'set themselves against the principal members of the body of Christ, that are to it as eyes and hands'. To change the figure, in smiting the shepherds they scatter the sheep and ruin the Church. Thus, they tend to destroy the Gospel and Christianity itself; and 'they hinder the conversion of particular souls and so are the cruellest wretches on earth'. For, 'the Ministry is God's instituted settled way by which He will convert and save the world, as truly as the light is the natural way by which he will corporally enlighten them'. 'How many million souls would these wretches sweep away to hell if they had their way'!

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[1] Writing in 1665 he says, 'I have oft asked the Quakers lately, why they chose the same Ministers to revile, whom all the Drunkards and swearers rail against . . . and' (why they) '*now* never meddle with the Pastors and Congregations'? And they Answer

(*a*) 'That these men sin in the open Light and need none to discover them, and

(*b*) 'That the Spirit hath his turns both of Severity and Lenity. But the Truth is, they knew *then*' (i.e. in Cromwell's day) 'they might be bold without any fear of suffering by it; and *now* it is time for them to save their Skins. They suffer enough for their own Assemblies' (*R.B.*, I, p. 116).

Consequently, they are 'the flat enemies of Christ himself and so He will regard them and use them' – 'I would not be found in the case of these Malignants, when Christ shall come to judge his enemies, for a thousand worlds'. Further, 'it is apparent that these enemies of the Ministry are playing the Papists' game', who 'know that if the people were brought into a hatred, or suspicion, of their guides they might the easier be won to them'.

Nothing shows better how imperfectly Baxter was able to apprehend the inner springs of Quakerism than his belief that, together with other Sectarian movements, it was contrived and engineered by the Papists. 'One Principal Agent doth act them all'. This notion became an obsession. 'Many Franciscan Friars and other Papists have been proved to be disguised Speakers in their' (Quaker) 'Assemblies and to be among them; and, its like, are the very soul of all their hellish delusions'.[1] He regards this charge as something proved. But the only evidence of proof he offers is a story culled from the Presbyterian fanatic, William Prynne,[2] to the effect that a Mr Coppinger, passing through Bristol on his way to Ireland, met an old schoolmate named Cowlishaw to whom he confessed himself to be a disguised Franciscan Friar and said he had just come from London where he had gone to all the 'Churches and Meetings Public and Private that he could hear of', and none 'came so near him as the Quakers'. In one Quaker meeting he recognized the two chief speakers as fellow Franciscans whom he had met in Rome; and he himself had spoken at Quaker meetings 'in London about 30 times', with much acceptance. Cowlishaw swore to the truth of this testimony before the Magistrates of Bristol in September 1654; and as the lawyer Prynne gave it credence so did Baxter – on Prynne's authority. But, for his own part, he professed to want no other proof than what he found in Quaker writings – out of which he enumerates at least a dozen clear signs of what seemed to him agreement with Popery!

In fact, as already said, the absurd notion became an obsession; and its root was a belief that the Pope, by fomenting the extremer forms of Separatism, hoped to render sober Protestants dissatisfied with the individualistic principle; and thus draw them back to the Catholicity of Mother Church. Experience has shown that this may be the way of return for some Protestants, and it may have been a part of Papal policy to work in that direction; but there is absolutely nothing to show that the Quakers were ever its willing promoters, or its unwilling dupes.

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[1] *R.B.*, II, p. 436.

[2] *The Quaker Unmasked*, pp. 3–8.

(2) It was not merely the ministry in general, whom they denounced, but in particular the English ministry. He calls this a charge of peculiar malignancy, and thus meets it: 'These enemies do reproach as faithful a ministry as the world enjoyeth, and their malice hath so little footing as that the result must be their own shame . . . The most of the Protestant Churches have a learned Ministry that is so taken up with Controversies that they are much less in the powerful preaching and practice of Godliness. Above all nations under Heaven the English are set upon Practical Divinity and Holiness; and yet even they are by Malignity chosen out for reproach.

'Alas, scandals in the Ministry (as drunkenness, swearing, etc) among other Nations are but too common; but in *England* Magistrates and Ministers combine against them. Ministers are still spurring on the Magistrates to cast out the insufficient, negligent and scandalous; and desire and use more severity with men of their own profession than with Magistrates or any others in the Land. In nothing are they more zealous than to sweep out all the remnant of the scandalous.

'And for themselves, they are devoted to the work of the Lord, and think nothing too much that they are able to perform; but preach in season and out of season, with all long-suffering doctrine; and yet Malignants make them their reproach'.

Baxter, with his habitual humility, evidently infers the character of the Ministry, as a whole, from his own – though the exceptions may really have been comparatively few. It is with the same humility that he meets a large number of specific complaints. For example, 'The Quakers say, *We are idle drones that labour not and therefore should* not eat'. Could all his brother-ministers sincerely answer as he did? 'The worst I wish you is that you had but my ease instead of your labour. I have reason to take myself for the least of Saints, and yet I fear not to tell the accuser, that I take the labour of most Tradesmen in the Town to be a pleasure to the body in comparison of mine (though for the ends and the pleasure of my mind, I would not change it with the greatest Prince). Their labour *preserveth* health, and mine *consumeth* it. They work in ease, and I in continual pain. They have hours and dayes of recreation, I have scarce time to eat and drink. Nobody molesteth them for their labour, but the more I do the more hatred and trouble I draw upon me. If a Quaker ask me, what all this labour is, let him come and see, or do as I do, and he shall know'.

Again, could he as safely rebut the charge of covetousness for all his brethren as he certainly could for himself in this way: '*We are content with food and rayment.* Most Ministers in *England* would be glad to give you all their tithes, if you will but allow them food and rayment for themselves and families, and such education for their children as is fittest to make them serviceable to God. And I hope it is no sin to have mouths that must be fed, or backs that must be clothed. What! must God's Ministers above all others be grudged *food* and *rayment* and that of the Lords portion[1] which none of you pay for? I fear not . . . to tell you that the Ministers, whose expenses I am acquainted with do give 500 pence for 50 that they receive by gift from their people; and that they take all that they have as Christ's and not their own; and if they have never so much they devote it to him, and know that he's not beholden to them for it: and some of them lay out in charitable uses much more than all the tithes that they receive for their Ministerial maintenance. And if the Quakers that accuse them of covetousness would cast up accounts with them, I doubt not but it will be found that they receive more by gift than Preachers, and give not the fourth part so much when they have done'.

Baxter was a loyal soul towards his brethren.

His answers to two other objections may be quoted, in conclusion, for their personal and historic interest. Said the Quakers, '*You have not the Spirit and therefore are no true ministers*'. 'How do you know', (asks Baxter); and gets the reply, you have not the Spirit because '*you read your sermons out of a Paper*'. 'A strong argument'; he answers; 'I pray you take seven years time to prove the consequence. As wisely do the Quakers argue, that because we use Spectacles, or hour glasses, and Pulpits, we have not the Spirit. Its not want of your abilities that makes Ministers use notes; but its a regard to the work, and good of the hearers. I use notes as much as any man when I take pains; and as little as any man, when I am lazy or busie, and have not leisure to prepare. Its easier to preach three Sermons without Notes than one with them. He is a simple preacher that is not able to preach all day without preparation, if his strength would serve, especially if he preach at your rates'.

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[1] i.e. Tithes.

Once more, '*The true Ministry is persecuted*', said the Quakers, 'but YOU rather persecute than are persecuted'. Baxter answered – 'For our persecuting others, be so merciful as to prove it to us that we may lament it'; and for our not being persecuted, have you forgotten that 'it is but a while ago since we had our share of sufferings' and that 'many of our Brethren are yet in *America* that were driven thither, at this time in *Spain* and *Italy* and *Germany* and *Savoy*? Alas! what do our Brethren suffer in the same cause and calling that we are in! And do you reproach us with our mercies, if we be out of the Furnace but a little while, in one corner of the world?'

All this and much more that he says, given his premises, was reasonable. But it was directed to people whose standpoint and his own (unhappily) looked opposite ways. The pity is that their differences excited a cloud of prejudices so dense, and a heat of temper so violent, that they had no chance of realizing the common foundation of Christian faith and experience which lay beneath their feet. Baxter's regretful memory of his feud with Edward Bagshaw when it was too late might have arisen here on both sides, if they had known each other better. 'While we wrangle here in the dark, we are dying and passing to the World that will decide all our Controversies; and the Safest Passage thither is by *peaceable Holiness*' (*R.B.*, III, p. 89).

4

THE ROMAN CONTROVERSY

Baxter, as a good Protestant and living when he did, with Puritan England more inflamed against Popery than it had ever been, may be supposed to have made it the subject of many a warning word in the Pulpit; and there is proof of this in the *Saints' Rest.*

But his first printed word on the subject belongs to the year 1657 when he published '*The Safe Religion, or Three Disputations for the Reformed Catholike Religion against Popery.* Proving that Popery is against the Holy Scriptures, the Unity of the Catholike Church, the consent of the Antient Doctors, the plainest Reason and common Judgment of sense itself'; and he tells how it was occasioned by the Quaker controversy: 'The great advance (he says) of the Popish interest by their secret agencies among the Sectaries, Seekers, Quakers, Behmenists etc did make me think it necessary to do something directly against Popery; and so I published three Disputations against them, one to prove our Religion safe, and another to prove their religion unsafe, and a third to shew that they overthrew the Faith by the ill Resolution of their faith. This book I entitled *The Safe Religion*'.[1] Popery stood to gain by Protestant disunion. The latter was a direct cause of its growth. So he thought in 1657; and twenty years later he thought the same. 'By the odium and scorn of our disagreements, inconsistency and multiplied sects they' (the Papists) 'will persuade people that we must either come for Unity to them or else all run mad and crumble into dust and individuals. Thousands have been drawn into Popery, and confirmed in it already, by this Argument, and I am persuaded that all the Arguments in *Bellarmine*, and all otherBooks that ever were written, have not done so much to make Papists in *England*, as the multitude of Sects among us. Yea some Professors of religious strictness, of great esteem for godliness, have turned Papists themselves when they were giddy and weary with turnings, and when they had run from Sect to Sect and found no consistency in any'.[2]

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[1] *R.B.*, I, p. 116.

[2] *A Defence of the Principles of Love*, Pt. I, p. 52 (1671).

There can be no doubt that he expresses here his strongest motive (on the negative side) for urging Protestant Unity. It was as if he said, by breaking up the English Church you are preparing for Popery to take its place. And what is Popery? About fifteen of his books, after 1657, are concerned (in whole or part) with the answer to that question; but they all, more or less, ring the changes on the same points, viz.:

(1) The Claim of *Universal Government.*

(2) The cherishing of *Ignorance* by forbidding the Reading of the Scripture in a known Tongue, without License, and *Latine* Prayers and Service, and an Ignorant Clergy.

(3) The Inhumane Doctrine of Transsubstantiation.

(4) The Vile Corruptions of much of God's Worship.

(5) Their horrid Blood-guiltiness, by which they do uphold their Kingdom called a Church. [Paraphrase of the New Testament (1685 'an advertisement' (at the end).]

His last writing on the subject, entitled 'The Protestant Religion truly stated', was issued a year after his death (1692) by Dr Daniel Williams and Matthew Sylvester. His fullest and most characteristic was: 'A Key for Catholicks – to open the Jugling of the Jesuits and to satisfie all that are but truly willing to understand whether the cause of the Roman or Reformed Churches be of God; and to leave the reader utterly unexcusable that after this will be a Papist' (1659). His manner of writing in this, as in his other controversies, was never very polite; and in the period before 1665 it reflected a severity of judgment which he came to regret. 'My censures of the Papists do much differ from what they were at first. I then thought that their Errours in the *Doctrines of Faith* were their most dangerous mistakes . . . but now I am assured that their Mis-expressions, and, misunderstanding us, with our mistakings of them and inconvenient expressing our own opinions, hath made the difference in these points to appear much greater than they are; and that in some of them it is next to none at all. But the great and unreconcilable Differences lye in their Church Tyranny and Usurpations, and in their great Corruptions and Abasements of God's Worship, together with their befriending of *Ignorance* and *Vice*. At first I thought . . . that a Papist cannot go beyond a Reprobate; but now I doubt not that God hath many sanctified Ones among them who have received the true Doctrine of Christianity so practically that their contradictory Errors prevail not against them, to hinder their Love of God and their Salvation, but that their errors are like a conquerable Dose of Poyson which nature doth overcome. And I can never believe that a Man may not be saved by that Religion which doth but bring him to the true Love of God and to a heavenly Mind and Life; nor that God will ever cast a Soul into Hell that truly loveth him' (*R.B.*, I, p. 131).

All the same, his Reasons for deprecating any political Toleration or Indulgence of Popery – reasons (to the number of twenty-five) which dictated his 'Fair Warning' in 1663[1] had not lost their force for him when in 1683 he wrote: 'for denying this' (Toleration) 'and being unreconcileable to Popery, the Papists are unreconcileable to us, so that nothing will satisfy them but our utter extirpation'.[2]

But, mainly on doctrinal grounds, he reached the point of actually suggesting the possibility of communion between the Roman and Reformed Churches. He expected the suggestion to be scouted on all hands. It was the proposal of 'a hopeless peace'. But he thought it within the reach of a wise charity, nevertheless. Here are what he conceived to be 'Five Several degrees of peace which might be attempted between the Roman and Reformed Churches'.[3]

(1) The highest is, that they might so far agree as to hold personal Communion in the same Assemblies in the Worship of God, and live under the same particular Pastors.

This he thinks were quite possible if, in point of Belief, nothing was imposed as necessary to salvation 'but what is contained in the Holy Scriptures, yea and in the three Creeds, and four first general Councils', while, in point of Worship, the Pastor were left to his own determining in accordance with Scripture and the 'general Rules of Order, decency, and Edification'.

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[1] 'Fair warning or twenty-five Reasons against Toleration and Indulgence of Popery; with the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury's letter to the King, and all the Bishops of Ireland's Protestation to the same purpose. With an Answer to the Roman Catholick Reasons for Indulgence. Also, the Excellent Reasons of the Honourable House of Commons against Indulgence; with Historical Observations thereupon' (1663).

[2] *The English Nonconformity under Charles II and James II* (1689, but date of Preface is September 28, 1683). By 'Us' Baxter means the 'meer Nonconformists'.

[3] *Key for Catholicks* (1659), pp. 448–50. Cp. Letter to the Duke of Lauderdale in 'Full and easy satisfaction which is the true and safe Religion' (1674).

(2) The second is, that they might 'hold a distant Catholick communion in several Assemblies without condemning or persecuting one another and may afford the special Love of Christians to each other'.

(3) 'I do also protest that it is not my desire or design to make any innocent Papist to be accounted guilty of the faults of others which he disowns'.

(4) 'Nor is it any of my desire or design to provoke the Magistrate to any cruelty or injustice towards them; nor to lay any penalty on them but what is truly of necessity for the safety of himself and the Commonwealth, and a just restraint of them from preventing others, and doing mischief to the souls of men. . . .'[1]

(5) 'Nor is it any of my desire or design to make the generality of them unjustly more odious with Rulers or People, than the measure of their corruptions do deserve: or to hide any of their virtues, or deprive them of any honour which is their due . . .'

It was no wonder that ultra-Protestants disowned and denounced him as something of a traitor; nor that when his 'Paraphrase of the New Testament' came out (1684) and it was found that he confessed himself very sceptical about the accepted identification of the Papacy with AntiChrist, the Beast, etc. – nay, that he even entered a strong protest against the usual description of the Romish Church as in no sense a true Church and as in every sense bad, he became anathema to Protestant fanatics. But he did not mind. 'As I can easily bear the Reproach of those that accuse me for no better understanding the *Revelations*, and of all that accuse me of being either too little against Popery and AntiChrist or too much – being shortly to be above the ignorant Obloquy of all Extreams – so, Readers, I earnestly advise you that you never take Faction for Religion, nor lying or betraying Truth for its Defence. Let them prove that Popes have not been Anti-Christ that can: it's none of my Work. But if you are never so sure that it is He indeed, pull him not down by calling Truth, Duty, or things Lawful Anti-Christian'.[1]

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[1] Cp. his address 'to the Literate Romanists' in *The Safe Religion* (1657) – towards the end.

Moreover, anyone acquainted with the language of the early Separatists and Presbyterians against the English Church so far as it retained the least 'remnant' or 'rag' of the Romish liturgy, will appreciate the moral courage no less than the Christian moderation and good sense of the following:

'I dread the turning Religion into a humane, love-killing Faction. If I abhor Millions and Millions merely on my uncertain exposition of the *Revelations*, I cannot do it in Faith. If one ask me why I do it, and I say, because they are of *Babylon*, or worship the Beast, and if you ask me how I know it, I must say that I know it not, but most here believe it because Mr A, Mr B, Mr C, etc say so. And so even as Papists found their *Faith*, and their hatred of us as heretics, on the credit of their Teachers that say so, so shall we ours on the word of our Teachers. And here I dread the effects – viz. – abhorring men causelessly, corrupting our Prayers and sermons and Books, and fathering all on God, condemning all as savouring Popery who have not contracted this hating disease, crying down many good and many harmless things merely because they came from the Beast and *Babylon*'.

'Temples themselves, good Prayers, excellent Ministers and Churches, yea Baptism itself, have been cryed down and renounced as *Babylonish* and *Antichristian*, and a ground of endless Divisions and starting at every Shadow that Rome hath had to do with, is thus laid; yea, the Seekers greatly countenanced that say Scripture, Church and Ministers are lost in the wilderness, and the Church feigned to be brought into the wilderness just when it was brought out of it (which was the *Pagan* persecution). Even the Protestant Churches are condemned as being Anti-Christians; and the Martyrs that suffered by Papists, yea and those that suffered by Papists, yea and those that suffered in the 3rd, 4th and 5th Centuries by *Arrians* and others, are all made by many to be children of Babylon; and a war proclaimed between professed Christians by which all the Romanists are tempted to hate and destroy us as those that would do so by them' (*Ibid.*, 'Advertisement').

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[1] *Paraphrase of New Testament*, last page.

One of Baxter's admirers was the Earl of Balcarres, the gallant loyalist who made a last stand for Charles II in the Highlands after the battle of Worcester; and then, accompanied by his heroic wife, joined him in exile. Strange to say, he got to know Baxter's books through his kinsman, the Earl of Lauderdale, who fed his soul upon them (so he said) during his imprisonment in Windsor Castle and wished Balcarres to share his benefit. At first the latter was disappointed. For the Book he was asked to read struck him as too favourable to the Papists; and he threw it aside. But Lauderdale begged him to go on; and he did, with the result that he became even more devoted to the Author than Lauderdale himself. His wife, also, caught his enthusiasm; and on her return to England in 1660 found his preaching her greatest comfort.[1] What he thought of her is clear from the beautiful dedicatory Epistle of his *Mischiefs of Self Ignorance and Benefits of Self-acquaintance* (1662) where, with a mingling of faithful counsel, he pourtrays a Christian character almost too perfect. In the Epistle dedicatory of another book – *A Treatise of the knowledge of God . . .* (1664) – consisting largely of sermons preached and published at her special request – he refers with deep sympathy and tenderness to the recent death of her eldest son.[2] But before this another, and to her feeling, a worse trouble had befallen her. This was the perversion of her daughter to Popery. The story, as told by Baxter in his Autobiography, illustrates vividly the sort of subtle and unscrupulous influence which he so much feared.

Hearing that the Countess was not well he went to enquire and found her 'grievously afflicted for her eldest daughter the Lady *Ann Lindsey* about 16 or 17 years of age who was suddenly turned Papist by she knew not whom'. She desired

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[1] Baxter was then in London.

[2] Charles, aged 12, who died 'of a stone in his heart of very strange magnitude' on October 15, 1662. He was the second Earl, his father having died in 1659 (August). Baxter's 'Epistle' is dated December 24, 1663.

Baxter to speak to the young Lady and 'try whether she would yet enter into conference about the Reason of her faith'. He did so; but she utterly refused. She simply referred him to the judgment of the Church. When Baxter got her to admit that Church, in her case, meant the word of some nameless Priest, he proposed that he and the Priest should meet. This she readily promised; and, when next they met, she renewed her promise on condition that the Priest might be secure from accusation and from danger of the law. So far as any action of his own was concerned, Baxter accepted the condition; and arranged that there should be a two days' conference, with two witnesses only on each side. Then the mysterious gentleman drew back; and Lady Ann had no reason to give, or was pledged not to give it. At length, however, she was permitted to tell him that the gentleman 'knew me very well, and that he had very high Thoughts of me, and that it was not now through any fear of Danger: for he durst venture his life in my Hands; but since he knew it was me that he was to meet with, he would not come; but would not tell her why'.

In fine, 'She told me that he would yield to dispute so it might be done only in writing and not a word spoken'. This meant, of course, that they were to dispute without meeting; and, although puzzled by the mystery, he consented: at least, all he asked was that they might 'first spend but two hours in verbal disputation'. 'But a Day or two after, when I came for Answer to this Proposal the Lady was gone, being secretly stolen from her Mother in a Coach, and so I understood the meaning of this Offer, and never could see the Face of any of her Priests.'[1]

Then it turned out that the intriguing Priest was a William Johnson (*alias* Terret) with whom Baxter had actually been disputing, on and off, 'above a twelvemonth'. This man had been introduced to him anonymously (in 1659) by one Mr Langhorn, a Furrier in Walworth (London) who sent him a 'Sheet of Paper' in which the anonymous Johnson argued for the 'sole visibility' of the Roman Church; and so, the unreality of all other Churches. Langhorn (set on by Johnson) asked Baxter to answer it, for the sake of 'some friends of his who were unsatisfied'. He sent him an answer next day; and, a few weeks later, received a reply which by its copious citations of Fathers and Councils 'brought the controversy into the wood of Church History'. To this he drew up 'a large Rejoinder'; and sent it by the Carrier – sent it as he thought, to London. A month 'after', however, there came from London an 'insulting challenge of a speedy answer', this being 'seconded by another, all calling for haste'. What then had happened to the 'large Rejoinder'? The Carrier could not tell; he could but protest that he had lost it. And no wonder: for it had been stolen from his cart, and handed to Mr Johnson *not in London but at the house of a certain Nobleman* within five or six miles of Kidderminster, where he lived. So Baxter learned when he went up to London in April 1660, his informant being Mr Tillotson[1] who told him further, that Johnson's true name was Terret; that he was often in London; and that he was 'the Chief Hector or Great Disputer for the Papists'. Johnson's pretence of not having received the 'Rejoinder' was, it appears, part of the game – viz. – to make out that Baxter had been silenced. In London Baxter insisted on meeting him and (*inter alia*) pinning him down to a strict definition of terms, etc.[2]

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[1] *R.B.* II, pp. 219–20.

It was just at this time that the Lady Ann fell under his influence; and it was not surprising, therefore, that he declined to see Baxter or let his name be divulged. 'And yet' – says Baxter – 'when I asked her whether it were he, she plainly and positively said it was not; and when a servant went after her coach and overtook her in Lincoln-inn-Fields, she positively promised to come again, and said she went to see a Friend; also, she complained to the Queenmother of her mother as if she used her hardly for Religion, which was false: in a word, her mother told me that before she turned Papist, she scarce ever heard a lye from her, and since then she could believe nothing that she said. This was the Darling of that excellent, wise, Religious Lady (the Widow of an excellent Lord) – which made the Affliction great, and taught her to moderate her Affections to all Creatures. This Perversion had been a long time secretly working before she knew of it; all which time the young Lady would join in Prayer with her mother, and jeer at Popery till she was detected, and then she said she might join with them no more. They that stole her away conveyed her to France, and there put her into a Nunnery where she is since dead'.[1]

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[1] Afterwards Archbishop.

[2] He put all together – his own and Johnson's case – in a Treatise (392 pp.), published this very year, 1660, entitled: '*The successive Visibility of the Church of Which the Protestants are the soundest Members. . . .*'

The last section consists of Letters between him and T. S. (Thomas Smith), a Papist whom he succeeded in converting. See *R.B.*, I, p. 119; II, pp. 218–19.

So far Baxter.

But readers of *Horæ Subsecivæ* may recall the note in a 'Letter to John Cairns DD'[2] where the writer (Dr John Brown) tells how 'in a copy of Baxter's *Life and Times* which he' (his father) 'picked up at Maurice Ogle's shop in Glasgow, which had belonged to Anne, Countess of Argyll,[3] besides her autograph, there is a most affecting and interesting note in that venerable lady's handwriting. It occurs on the page where Baxter brings a charge of want of veracity against her eldest and name-daughter, who was perverted to Popery. They are in a hand tremulous with age and feeling: 'I can say with truth I never in all my lyff did hear her lye, and what she said, if it was not trew, it was by others suggested to hir, as yyt she wold embak[4] on Wednesday. She believed she wold, but they took hir, alles!, from me who never did see hir mor. The minester of Cuper, Mr John Magill, did see hir at Paris in the convent. Said she was a knowing and vertuous person, and hed retined the living principals of our relidgon, which made him say it was good to grund young persons weel in their relidgion, as she was one it appired weel grunded'.

The Autobiography was printed in 1696 when the Countess was very old; and it may well be that her still warm and regretful love blurred her memory of what she had said to Baxter in the first anguish of her grief (at least thirty-six years before) when some anger would inevitably mingle with her pain. On the other hand, it lay in the nature of the case that Baxter might unconsciously exaggerate in his recital; but that he meant to set down nothing more than the facts may be taken for certain. He completes the story by saying that the day before Lady Anne left home he wrote her a letter – December 1, 1660 – intended to restrain and restore her; but (as one can see) admirably suited, in the case of a high-spirited girl of sixteen or seventeen, to do the contrary. He prints this in full; and adds another (dated London, January 29, 1660–1) which, at her Mother's request, he wrote in answer to the first (and only?) letter received from her 'not long after her departure'. It was addressed to her 'Lady Mother' from Calice and subscribed 'Sister Anna Maria'.

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[1] This was written in or about 1670.

[2] P. 275, Dent's edition.

[3] In 1671 Dowager-Countess Balcarres married Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyll (who was beheaded in 1685).

[4] Come back?

5

CONTROVERSY WITH PRELATISTS AND SEPARATISTS

It needs to be borne in mind that Baxter always considered himself a loyal member of the Church of England. When asked on one occasion – what is the Church of England? he said: 'It is nothing but a Christian Kingdom consisting of a Christian supreme Power, and combined Christians as Churches governed by that Power. It is not Liturgies nor Ceremonies that essentiate the Church of *England*. Orthodox Godly Presbyterians and Independents who deny not a Christian Kingdom of Christian Churches (though differing in many things) are all parts of the true Church of ENGLAND'.[1] Here two points are noticeable: (1) that the Church is regarded as co-extensive with the nation; and (2) that the Supreme Power in it is the Magistrate.

Baxter does not expressly say the latter, in this place; but that is what he means. He was so far an Erastian as to hold that if the Magistrate's rule covers the whole nation in civil affairs it did the same in things ecclesiastical; and that, therefore, he must at least keep an eye on the church and compel obedience to its laws, by force if necessary. On the other hand, the Clergy had no right to the exercise of force at all, nor had they any right to dictate its use. In relation to the state they are simply its officers for whose good conduct the Magistrate, directly or indirectly, is responsible. We can see why he was not in favour with strict Presbyterians.

(1) With the Magistrate as Supreme Power in the Church and the nation as its 'material', what Baxter conceived to be its proper 'form' was in fairly close agreement with the scheme of Archbishop Usher – viz. – particular Churches shall be defined by parochial boundaries; every Church shall have 'their own elders to govern them, all of one order and office'; the duties

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[1] *R.B.*, Appendix IV, p. 169. Cp. 'A national Church and a Christian Kingdom constituted of a Christian Sovereign Magistrate and of Christian Subjects worshipping God (ordinarily in True Particular Pastoral Churches) is the same thing. The ignorance of this has confounded the Christian World'. 'Treatise of National Churches. . . .' Epistle to the Readers (March 26, 1691).

of an elder shall be to preach, teach and rule the flock; his rule shall include the use of the Keys, i.e. authority to determine who are fit subjects for admission to the Lord's supper, or for suspension, or for exclusion, provided he acts, as far as may be, with the concurrence of his regular communicants; the local elders or Bishops shall elect one of themselves to 'have a Presidency and Ruling or negative Voice'; 'these Churches shall keep necessary correspondency for Love, concord and mutual helps by messengers and Synods of their Bishops or Pastors, but not as law-makers to their Brethren'; with the magistrate's consent, the Bishops or Pastors shall agree 'to appoint some of their wisest and gravest and best, to visit and oversee the rest of the Pastors and Churches in several Precincts, so far as to teach the Young and ignorant, and exhort them to holy prudent diligence, and reprove them that are blameworthy, but not to have the forcing power of the Sword'. Such provincial Bishops might preside in assemblies of their fellow-elders when they meet for any common purpose, and especially for the ordaining of men who have been duly nominated and examined and approved. Finally, Baxter had no objection to synodical meetings of still wider scope presided over by an elective Bishop answering to a Metropolitan.

In bare outline, this was Baxter's model – one drawn, he believed, from the New Testament and the practice of the Early Church for at least the first two centuries.[1]

(2) But the next point to observe is, that, although the English Church of his experience differed widely from this model he never had any thought of leaving it. There was much in the Prayer Book which he disliked; but he used it at Bridgnorth before coming to Kidderminster, and, at Kidderminster until it was suppressed by ordinance of Parliament; and if, after 1660, it had been restored simply in its old form without those additions or alterations intended to irritate, and an oath which bound him to accept *ex animo* every detail of its contents, it is certain he would have remained in the Church. He had no objection to Episcopacy in itself; and (as quoted above) 'Litur-

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[1] I have quoted from the Preface of *Second Part of the Nonconformists Plea for Peace* (1680); but have supplemented this from his (very frequent) references elsewhere.

gies and Ceremonies' did not for him 'essentiate the Church'. There was not a little, again, in the administration of the Church which he disliked; but his theory of the Magistrate as possessing a (divine) right to govern the Church by what officers he approved, would have constrained him to submit passively even to Lay Chancellors and Diocesan Bishops, etc., if this had been all that was demanded. It was the further demand that he should swear (*a*) to his belief in the administration of the Church as strictly in accord with the Word of God and (*b*) never on any account to attempt a change, which challenged his conscience to Nonconformity.

(3) Before 1660 what he strove with all his might to effect was a concordat of Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents on the basis of a common agreement in Doctrine and Discipline – leaving differences about government and worship on one side. It was a private venture consequent on the failure of the Magistrate to do his part. When he wrote the preface to the 2nd edition of the *Saints' Rest* in January 1651 we find him saying: 'Will God never put into the hearts of Rulers to call together some of the most Godly learned Moderate and peaceable of all four opinions' (moderate Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopal and Erastian) '*not too many* to agree upon a way of union and accommodation and not to cease till they have brought it to this Issue – to come as near together as they can possibly in their Principles; and where they cannot, yet to unite as far as may be in their Practice, though on different Principles; and where that cannot be, yet to agree on the most loving, peaceable course in the way of carrying on our different Practices, that so (as *Rup. Meldenius* saith) we may have Unity in things necessary, Liberty in things Unnecessary and Charity in all. The Lord persuade those who have power, to this Pacificatory enterprize without delay'.[1] It was not till his hope failed him from this quarter that he began to act. But he still prayed and believed that his private venture might draw to itself so wide and strong a support that at length the Magistrate would be induced to act, and to act along the lines which his experiment had proved to be comprehensively effective.

(4) But there were two mighty obstacles – one, a certain

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[1] Dedication to *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, paragraph 5.

section of the Episcopalians and the other, a miscellaneous crowd of extreme sectaries. The latter stood immediately in the way of any action by the Cromwellian government of the kind Baxter desired; the former frustrated all hopes of it, as soon as the Restoration lifted them into power. As to these – the ultra Episcopalians or Prelatists – Baxter was well aware of their existence;[1] and of the fact that if ever they prevailed his dream of a United National Church would end. They were the remnant of the Laudians and made no great show on the surface; but he had come across some specimens of them as early as 1653, and by 1659 he knew them to be in the ascendant. This is how he wrote in 1653 (December) when 'some exceptions against the Worcestershire Agreement' were sent him by Dr Warmstry.[2]

'What would you have wished me and all the Ministers of our Association to have done for Concord with *you*? . . . Many of the Ministers after earnest study and Prayer cannot be satisfied that Episcopacy is *Jure Divino* or lawful: it is not in their power to change their own Judgments. Till they do change them and procure Episcopal Ordination, you will not take them for any Ministers at all; no, nor joyn in the Association lest you be guilty of acknowledging them Ministers. What means then have we for concord with such as you? Only this – renounce your Ministry; all must forbear Preaching and Baptizing, and all Ministerial Duties; all must forsake the Congregations of Christ here and throughout *England* that are in the same case, and then you will be at concord with us. But what Concord? Not as fellow Pastors; that cannot be, when we must first renounce that office. The meaning then of your desired concord is this, give up all your Offices and Churches to us, and let us alone to have our own way, and do all, and then we will have Concord with you as our people, whilst you obey us'.

In 1659, being well aware of the quarter in which the Laudian tradition and influence were strongest, he addressed the Preface of his *Five Disputations of Church government and Worship*

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[1] He had one at his own door in Sir Ralph Clare and another at Sir John Pakington's not far off in Dr Hammond.

[2] *R.B.*, Appendix I, pp. 13–14.

'to those of the Nobility, Gentry and Commons of this land that adhere to Prelacy'; and, in the course of it, besought their attention to the difference between the old Episcopal Divines of the English Church and the New:

(1) The old Episcopal Divines did take Episcopacy to be better than Presbyterian equality, but not necessary to the Being of a Church, but to the Better being where it may be had. But the New Prelatical Divines . . . unchurch those Churches that are not Prelatical.

(2) The old Episcopal Divines thought that Ordination by Presbyters without Prelates was valid, and not to be done again, though irregular. But the New ones take it to be No Ordination, nor those so ordained to be any Ministers, but Lay men.

(3) And accordingly the Old Episcopal Divines did hold the Forrein Protestant Churches of France, Savoy, Holland, Geneva, Helvetia etc that had no Prelates as true Churches, and their Pastors as true Ministers of Christ, and highly valued and honoured them as Brethren. But the New Sort do disown them all as no true Churches, though they acknowledge the Church of Rome to be a true Church, and their Ordination Valid.

(4) The Old Episcopal Divines thought it Lawful to join in actual Communion with the Pastors and Churches that were not Prelatical. But the New ones separate from their communion, and teach the people to do so, supposing Sacramental Administrations to be there performed by men that are no Ministers, and have no authority.

(5) The Old Episcopal Divines thought it meet to suspend, silence, imprison, or undo those Godly Divines that did not bow towards the Altar, or publish, to their People, Declarations or Instructions for Dancing on the Lords Day or that did preach twice a day. But many of the New Ones practically told us that this was *their* Judgment.[1]

The logic of this position, of course, was that the New sort of Divines, as soon as they had the chance, 'would have all these Ministers, that they take for none, to be silenced and cast out'; and there were men busily at work exciting them to this already – particularly one Thomas Pierce (or Peirce) whose charges against the Presbyterians (i.e. in his view, all Non-prelatical Puritans) made them out to be 'a bloody perfidious sort of men unfit to live in a commonwealth' – no less than spurious Ministers.[1] With the prospect of such men as he in the saddle, Baxter greatly dreaded, while his conscience forbad him to oppose and even forced him to hasten, the downfall of the 'usurpation' and the 'lawful' King's return.

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[1] As examples of the old Episcopal Divines he cites Jewel, Pilkington Abbet, Usher, Hall, Davenant; and of the New – Montague, Laud, Heylen, Bramhall, Hammond.

'I know of none before Dr Montague (1577–1641) of their way, and but few that followed him till many years after'.

Baxter regarded the Prelatists as really Separatists and Schismatics in as much as they cut themselves off from the general body of Christians; and the fact that they should have control of the Church's framework did but make the matter worse. But usually 'Separatists' was his name for the adherents of any form of Religious belief who embodied themselves in a sect outside the established order. In this sense it included Quakers, Seekers, Ranters, Anabaptists of the extremer sort, and also such Independents as Browne, Barrow, Robinson and their descendants, though he distinguished between these and the more moderate Independents like the Five of the Westminster Assembly. What he thought of Moderate Independency may be gathered from one of the opening paragraphs of the 2nd Part of his Autobiography. 'And for the *Independents*, I saw that most of them were Zealous, and very many Learned, Discreet and godly Men; and fit to be very serviceable in the Church. And I found in the search of Scripture and Antiquity, that in the beginning a *Governed Church* and a *stated worshipping Church* were all one, and not two several things; and that though there might be other by-Meetings in places like our Chappels or Private Houses – for such as Age or persecution hindered to come to the more solemn Meetings – yet Churches then were no bigger (in number of Persons) than were Parishes now (to grant the most); and that they were Societies of Christians united for *Personal Communion* and not only for Communion by Meetings of Officers and Delegates in Synods, as many Churches in Association be. . . . Also I saw a commendable care of *serious Holiness* and *Discipline* in most of the Independant Churches; and I found that some Episcopal Men (as Bishop *Usher* himself did voluntarily profess his Judgment to me) did hold that every Bishop was independent, as to Synods; and that Synods were not proper Governours of the Particular Bishops, but only for their Concord'.

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[1] Pierce (1622–91) was to Baxter the Bancroft of his day in respect of violent persecuting enmity to the Puritans and too many took what he said as 'unquestionable' just as they did what Bancroft said about Cartwright, Travers and the Presbyterian Ministers of an earlier time. (See *D. N. B.*)

So far, he may be said to have agreed with them; and, indeed, to have been guided by their principles in his Church-experiment at Kidderminster. But there were things he disliked in them – particularly that they made too light of Ordination; that they had their office of Lay-Elderships (unordained men without power to preach or administer the Sacraments); that they were commonly stricter about qualifications of Church members than Scripture, Reason or the Practice of the Universal Church would allow; that the most of them were democratic, or 'made the People by majority of Votes to be Church-governors'; and that 'their Way' showed a lamentable tendency 'to Divisions and sub-divisions and the nourishing of Heresies and Sects.'[1]

It was the (supposed) democratic principle of Independency which most alarmed him; and mainly, because it encouraged the separatist tendency. People imbued with the notion of self-government as their right were (Baxter thought) under an irresistible temptation to leave a Church in which government was 'made an Act of office'. Hence he could say to Mr Tombes,[2] '*That* Independency which gives the people to govern by vote is the same thing in another name as separatism'. It was his acquaintance with 'many Independents' who 'would not have the people govern by vote' that led him to think and speak of these as moderates who might be expected to remain within the national establishment no less than the moderate Episcopalians and Presbyterians. To his mind, therefore, it was a sign that the moderates had succumbed to the extremists when the Congregational Churches met at the Savoy in (September 29 – October 12) 1658 and agreed upon a Declaration of faith and practice which had the effect at once of stamping them as a distinct organization. 'To consummate the confusion by confirming and increasing the Division, the Independents at last, when they had refused with sufficient pervicacy to associate with the Presbyterians (and the Reconcilers too) did resolve to shew their proper strength, and to call a General Assembly of all their Churches. The Savoy was their Meeting-place. There they drew up a Confession of their Faith, and the orders of their Church Government . . .' As to the former Baxter found it Antinomian and contrary to the doctrine of 'all the Reformed and Christian Churches'; 'also, in their Propositions of Church Order, they widened the breach, and made things much worse, and more unreconcileable than ever they were before. So much could two Men[1] do with many honest tractable young Men, who had more Zeal for *separating Strictness* than *Judgment* to understand the *Word of God*, or the Interest of the Churches of the Land and of themselves.'[2]

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[1] *B.P.*, II, p. 14.

[2] *Plain Scripture Truth* . . . p. 257.

Baxter's tone here is not generous; but his statement of fact, that the result of the Synod, however unintentional, was to strengthen and solidify the Separatist tendency, is hardly open to question. What he failed to see was the essential incompatibility between the Independent position and his own. Hitherto, the 'Moderate' Independents, who had expressed distrust of the popular vote and dependence on the Magistrate, were not so much moderate as inconsistent.

The Synod was an attempt (not wholly successful)[3] to achieve consistency. In doing so moderate Independency may be said to have worked out for the first time its own implications (as Browne, Barrow and Robinson had done long before); and developed a corporate self-consciousness; and so become able to see just where it stood. This was well; and was bound to come sooner or later. But Baxter's rather bitter feeling of disappointment is intelligible and deserves sympathy. Let anyone read pp. 188–93 (Pt. II) of *R.B.*; and consider how far he went with Philip Nye, and what good grounds he seemed to have for believing that agreement was near at hand. He will conclude, then, (perhaps) that Baxter would have been more than human if he had not felt bitter.

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[1] The two men were Dr Owen and Phillip Nye – men different in spirit from such a man as Jeremiah Burroughs, who though joining himself to the Five dissenting Ministers in the Westminster Synod 'never preached their Church-gathering way'. John Owen took his place; but by him and Nye 'the Flames were increased' and 'our Wounds kept open'. In fact they carried on 'as if none but they were considerable in the world'!

[2] *R.B.* I, p. 104.

[3] See chap. 24 of 'The Confession of Faith'—'of the Civil Magistrate'.

Nevertheless, he sought an accommodation with Dr John Owen ten years later[1] – when both were outcasts from the Church and the general prospects were far less bright. Any the least encouragement was enough to move him towards new efforts, and the encouragement came in a book which Owen 'had lately written (a Catechism for Independency)'. It was 'offensive to others' (says Baxter) but welcome to himself; and welcome because it gave up 'two of the worst of the Principles of Popularity', viz.:

That the People have the Power of the Keys; and That they refuse the Power of the Keys or their Office-Power to the Pastors. If Owen would stand by these negatives, Baxter was sure that Owen and he could draw up a platform of positives such as might win very general assent. And so 'though all our business with each other had been contradiction, I thought it my Duty without any thoughts of former things, to go to him and be a Seeker of Peace; which he seemed to take well and expressed great desires of Concord, and also many Moderate Concessions, and how heartily he would concur in anything that tended to a good agreement'. This was the first of many interviews or interchanges in which the eagerness soon came to be all on one side – if there had ever been any on Owen's. First, Baxter proposed that each of them should 'bring in a Draught' of Terms for Communion, but Owen 'cast it on' him 'alone', and when he brought in his Draught said it was too long; next, Baxter brought in a revised Draught which Owen kept a few weeks without a word, and then (after Baxter had 'waited upon him again and again') described as 'the fairest Offer and the likeliest Means that ever he saw'; then Owen, not being able to venture out on account of the cold and a Cold, wrote a letter (January 25, 1668–9) compounded of wholesale appreciation and retail criticism.

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[1] *R.B.*, III, pp. 61–9.

Before he had a chance of posting it Baxter called and received it into his hand but did not read it till he got home to Acton, whereupon he wrote (February 16, 1668–9) a reply which quite well explains, in its too great candour mixed with too little tact, why this as also some earlier endeavours for Peace did not, or did but partially, succeed. Owen called it a 'chiding letter'. 'It is clear', he said, (when he called to see Baxter at his lodgings in Town) 'that you suspect my Reality in the business, but you shall see it, and my Practice shall reproach your Diffidence'. In fact, however, either his interest died away, or he found the hostility of the rank and file stronger than he had foreseen, or he lost faith in Baxter's practical sense and skill. Anyhow, having retained his Papers 'near a year and a quarter' he returned them with these, and no other words – '*I am still a well-wisher to those Mathematicks*'. 'This was the issue' – says Baxter – 'of my third Attempt for Union with the Independants'.

No doubt what Owen would not like in Baxter's scheme was that part of it in which he 'chides' the separatist method of the Independents as contrasted with the parochial method of 'the Presbyterians and Moderate Episcopal Men'. These, he says, are hindered 'from closing with you' by two principal reasons:

(1) They think 'your way tends to destroy the Kingdom of Christ by dividing it' inasmuch as 'all excommunicate Persons or Hereticks or humorous Persons may at any time gather a Church' separate from the Church to which they belonged and then 'may stand on equal Terms with' the latter. There is no remedy from any extraneous authority: for you have none.

(2) 'They think, while you seem to be for a *Stricter discipline* than others, that your way (or usual Practice) tendeth to extirpate Godliness out of the Land by taking a very few that can talk more than the rest, and making them the Church, and shutting out more that are worthy, and by neglecting the Souls of all the Parish else, except as to some publick Preaching. . . .' 'They think that *Parish-Reformation* tendeth to the making *Godliness universal*, and that *your separation* tendeth to dwindle it to nothing . . .' 'In our Countrey' (county) 'almost all the rest of the Ministers agreed to deal seriously and orderly with all the Families of their Parishes (which some did to their

wonderful benefit) except your party and the highly Prelatical; and they stood off'.

Then he cites three illustrations, (1) his own case at Kidderminster where, at the outset of his ministry, there were some who would have had him 'take 20 Professors for the Church and leave a Reader to head and gratifie the rest'.

But he chose the Parochial way, with results which evoked the gratitude of those who had advised the separatist. 'They told me they had been undone, if I had followed their Counsel'.[1]

(2) The operation of the Parochial method in Scotland as described to him by 'an honest Scotsman' with whom he had talked 'the last week' at Acton.

(3) The condition of Acton itself which had enjoyed the Ministry of two of the most able and pious Independents – Mr Nye and Mr Elford – and yet could show 'but one Person (a woman)' remaining in the Town and Parish 'that was admitted to the Sacrament'. 'Rich Families (Mr *Rous*, Major *Skippons*, Collonel *Sely*, and Mr *Humphreys*) were admitted while the rest were refused or neglected'. Nevertheless, 'there are comparatively few openly scandalous Persons in the Town'; 'there are many who, I have reason to believe, do seriously fear God and are fit for Church-Communion'; 'almost the whole Town and Parish (even those who seemed most averse) are desirous and diligent to hear, even in private, and seem to be desirous of Family-helps, and desire good Books to read in their Families'. He goes on to say that if he were their Pastor and had time to visit and instruct them, he sees no reason to doubt but that the work at Kidderminster could be repeated at Acton.[2]

Add to the above, Baxter's conviction that the Independents were wrong in yielding so large a place to the vote of the people and so small a place to the rule of the magistrate, and we have pretty much his whole case against them. His latest years did nothing to change his attitude, while the fact that many of the Independents (for reasons not far to seek) became, more or less, fanatically separatist after 1662 intensified his protest.[3]

[1] Cp. *R.B.*, Appendix, p. 76, paragraph 10.

[2] Baxter lived at Acton from July 1663 to June 1669. There is a letter among the Baxter MSS. to John Eliot the Missionary in which he, more at length, goes over the same ground as here. Mr Eliot was an Independent—'with doubts'.

[3] See what, I think, may have been his last expression of opinion on the subject in *R.B.*, Appendix IV, pp. 67–81.

EPILOGUE

Baxter was dominated by an ideal purpose and subordinated everything to its attainment.

This is the great lesson of his life.

In the light of this all his studies, his preaching, his controversies, his books fall into place and make a consistent whole.

If we ask what was his purpose there are many passages, especially in the *Saints' Everlasting Rest* which might suggest that it was the making sure of heaven; but we need to ask again, what did he really mean by heaven, and the answer would be that for him heaven meant the perfect fellowship with God which comes through perfect moral likeness to God and above all through the Spirit of love. Stripping away the imagery of his descriptions – which he used because he found it in the Scriptures and in order to assist sluggish minds, including his own, to lay hold on things spiritual, – this was the goal of his desire and endeavour. Passages innumerable, if need be, might be quoted for illustration. Hence the working element, so to speak, in his theology was the fact that Christ had made this possible – had somehow brought God and the soul together, and revealed the whole will of God, and ensured to the believer the free gift of inward power to do it, and guaranteed to his faithfulness absolute victory at the last. Baxter, like other divines of his day, gets dreadfully entangled in explanatory theories which explain nothing; but we always feel sure in reading him that sooner or later all these will be left behind and we shall arrive at some clear and simple summary which the dullest can understand. His dialectics were a pleasure to himself and (so he thought) a medium of light. He is never quite easy unless he can state and argue and defend and express his beliefs in logical form. All the same, the logical form was an excrescence. It had no vital relation to the faith that glowed in his heart, and inspired his speech to the people. That faith, as already suggested, was very simple: Time is given you to prepare for eternity; your fate hereafter depends on the sort of moral life you spend here; by means of Christ you are offered forgiveness of the past, you have a clear knowledge of what God wants you to do, you receive grace to do it. Surrender yourself to God in Christ as Saviour and Master; and Heaven is yours, the home of perfect happiness because a state of perfect holiness. On the other hand, continue disobedient and impenitent, and Hell is yours no less certainly – a place and state of everlasting woe. His doctrine of Hell was Baxter's weakest point, and he knew it. But for the word of Scripture there is no doubt he would most gladly have thought of it, and presented it, in a very different way. As it was, it seemed to him that he had no choice. If Hell was the reality which certain Scriptures plainly said it was, then there could be nothing more urgent than to escape it, and help others to escape. But, I repeat, his doctrine of Hell was by no means the core of Baxter's faith. He had to believe it; he had to preach it; and it is almost the finest witness to his utter sincerity that he preached it more vividly than any of his brethren, while all the time his heart was in agony. But deeper than his faith in hell was his faith in heaven as another name for a state of absolute goodness; and deeper than his fear of hell was his love of God as absolute goodness personified. If Miss Sichel's definition of a Saint – an enthusiast for goodness – be correct, Baxter deserves the name beyond most in the calendar. Whether his conception of God, and so of goodness, was defective is not now the point. The point is that upon God and goodness as he conceived them, his whole heart was set. This was the central fire of his life. Without irreverence it might be said that he valued all doctrines, all means of Grace, the Scriptures, and even Christ himself as co-operant to this end. It was this which made him so honest in self examination, so humble in self judgment, and so unflagging in those efforts to fix his thoughts and desires on God alone which he calls meditation. It was this which made him the most fearless preacher in all England when the call came to him from God, as he believed, to set forth the right or expose and denounce the wrong, whether the people concerned were his own parishioners, or his brother-ministers, or the Judges and lawyers of an Assize Court, or the nobles and rich men of a county, or the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, or Cromwell in Westminster Abbey, or Charles II in Whitehall. It was this which made him more implacable towards an Antinomian perversion of the Gospel than towards any other religious error; and made him, constantly, in his own sermons careful, beyond everything else, to enforce the necessity of whole-hearted obedience to the moral law of Christ. It was this which made him so impatient of those teachers in the Church who started controversies on matters of second- or third-rate importance; and, thereby, drew men off from the great things, as well as wasted their own strength. It was this, strange to say, which made him a controversialist in his own person: for he did but wage war to end war. Here, indeed, his simplicity and self-ignorance are often manifest. It seldom occurred to him that his silence would be wiser than his speech. He misread the psychology of many an opponent, and overrated the force of many of his appeals. Yet it is strictly true to say that what lay behind all his striving was an intense desire for Peace and Concord, in order to attain a state in which the Church should be able to see its duty clearly and attend to it without distraction. It is, also, strictly true to say that, for Baxter, the Church's duty, reduced to its essence, was so to realize and believe and preach and live the Gospel as to save men *from* sin, and *to* that Sanctification apart from which no man can see the Lord – can win heaven, or escape hell.

In fine, Baxter, at the heart of him, was the Passionate Pilgrim ever pressing forward to a radiant goal – the goal being salvation, in the sense of moral goodness total and complete; but inexpressibly eager, at every step, to take others with him, and to persuade his fellow-Christians, his fellow-ministers especially, to cease their quarrellings about lesser things and do the same. Here we have the simple clue to his complex activities. It is easy to miss the clue. It is easy to quote abundant reasons for picturing him as a meddlesome debater, and a quarrelsome censor, and a theological spider weaving around him an expanding web of futile notions and distinctions. But admitting, as he himself admitted, that he was often too quick to speak, or defeated his own purpose, or was led away into bypaths, it is yet safe to affirm that there was no man of his generation who realized with such clearness the great end he had set before him, or pursued it with such unfaltering and consuming zeal.

We might cite the whole manner and method of his life at

Kidderminster as a proof. As further proof we might cite the fact that he deliberately chose to use his pen in writing, quickly and even carelessly, many books and brochures which seemed to him, or his friends, called for by the necessities of the moment rather than devote it to the composition of a few works, with all the skill at his command, which might have ensured to him lasting honour and fame. But the best proof may be drawn from the spirit and strain of his preaching. In the pulpit he was supreme. His influence there could sway any audience as the wind can sway a field of corn. Was he never tempted to use his influence unworthily? If so, there is no sign of it. As a preacher, his sense of responsibility was excessive. He was Christ's ambassador – sent on a mission of life or death – called to speak a message which it must be his one and sole business to explain, commend and enforce. Having accepted the commission he was no longer his own Master: all he had to do, whatever the consequences, was to be faithful. His reward was not popularity or respect or money – money least of all, but the Master's concurrent and final 'well done.' There could be no success if he failed of *that*. Such were the thoughts which filled him from first to last; and were the controlling motives of his ministry. By way of partial illustration let us ask him briefly to speak for himself.

(1) Here is an expression of his belief, drawn from his observation that, in England at least, preaching of the right sort was more effective than ceremonies.

'There is (I know not perfectly whence) among the most of the Religious serious People of these Countreys, a suspicion of all that is ceremonious in God's Service, and of all which they find not warrant for in Scripture, and a greater inclination to a rational convincing earnest way of Preaching and Prayers, than to the written form of words which are to be read in Churches. And they are greatly taken with a Preacher that speaketh to them in a familiar natural language, and exhorteth them as if it were for their lives; when another that readeth or saith a few composed Words in a reading Tone, they hear almost as a Boy that is saying his lesson. . . .' (*R.B.*, I, p. 32).

(2) Here is a specimen of the way he appealed to his brother-ministers.

'The Lord forbid that they that have undertaken the sacred office of revealing the excellencies of Christ to the world, should make light of him themselves, and sleight that salvation which they do daily preach. The Lord knows we are all of us so low in our estimation of Christ, and do this great work so negligently that we have cause to be ashamed of our best Sermons; but should *this* sin prevail in us, we were the most miserable of all men. Brethren, I love not censoriousness, yet dare not befriend so vile a sin in myself or others under pretence of avoiding it; especially when there is so great necessity that it should be healed first in them that make it their work to heal it in others. O that there were no cause to complain that Christ and salvation are made light of by the Preachers of it! But (1) Do not negligent studies of some speak it out? (2) Doth not their dead and drowsie preaching declare it? Do *they* not make light of the Doctrine they preach that do it as if they were half asleep, and feel not what they speak themselves? (3) Doth not the carelessness of some men's private endeavours discover it? What do they for souls? How sleightly do they reprove sin? How little do they when they are out of the Pulpit, for the saving of men souls? (4) Doth not the continued neglect of those things wherein the interest of Christ consisteth discover it? – viz. – (*a*) The Church's Purity and Reformation. (*b*) Its Unity. (5) Doth not the covetous and worldly lives of too many discover it, losing advantages for mens souls, for a little gain to themselves? And most of this is because men are Preachers before they are Christians, and tell men of that which they never felt themselves'.

(3) Here is an account of the experience which led him to cultivate a plain and even diffuse manner of preaching instead of the precise and concise manner which was naturally more to his taste.

'. . . The Plainest words are the profitablest Oratory in the weightiest matters. Fineness is for ornament, and delicacy for delight; but they answer not *Necessity*, though sometime they may modestly attend that which answers it. Yea, when they are conjunct, it is hard for the necessitous hearer or Reader to observe the matter of ornament and delicacy, and not to be carried from the matter of Necessity; and to hear or read a neat, concise, sententious Discourse, and not to be hurt by it: for it usually hindereth the due operation of the matter and keeps it from the heart, and stops it in the fancy, and makes it seem as light as the stile. We use not to stand upon Complement or Precedency when we run to quench a common fire, nor to call men out to it by an eloquent speech. If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay. I shall never forget the relish of my soul when God first warmed my heart with these matters, and when I was newly entered into a seriousness in Religion. When I read such a Book as Bishop Andrew's Sermons, or heard such kind of preaching, I felt no life in it: methought they did but play with holy things. Yea, when I read such as Bishop *Hall*, or *Henshaw's* Meditations, or other such Essays, Resolves, and witty things, I tasted little sweetness in them: though now I can find much. But it was the plain and pressing downright Preacher that onely seemed to me to be in good sadness, and to make somewhat of it, and to speak with life and light and weight. And it was such kind of writings that were wonderfully pleasant and savoury to my soul. And I am apt to think that it is thus now with my Hearers, and that I should measure them by what I was, and not by what I am. And yet I must confess that though I can better digest exactness and brevity than I could so long ago, yet I as much value seriousness and plainness; and I feel in myself, in Reading or hearing, a despising of that wittiness as proud foolery, which savoureth of levity, and tendeth to evaporate weighty Truths and turn them all into very fancies, and keep them from the heart. As a Stage-player or Morries-dancer differs from a souldier or a King, so do these preachers from the true and faithful Ministers of Christ. And as they deal liker to Players than Preachers in the Pulpit so usually their hearers do rather come to play with a Sermon than to attend a Message from the God of Heaven about the life or death of their Souls.

'Indeed, the more I have to do with the ignorant sort of people the more I find that we cannot possibly speak too plainly to them. If we do not speak in their own vulgar dialect, they understand us not. Nay, if we do so, yet if we compose those very words into a handsomeness of sentence, or if we speak anything briefly, they feel not what we say. Nay, I find, if we do not purposely dress out the matter into such a length of words and use some repetition of it – that they may hear it inculcated on them again – we do but over-run their understandings, and they presently lose us. That very stile and way that is apt to be a little offensive to the exact and that is tedious and loathsome to the curious ear, whose Religion is most in ayr and fancie – must be it that must do good upon the ignorant, and is usually most savoury and acceptable to them. Upon such consideration I purposely chose so course a stile in the handling of this subject: for I preacht and wrote it, not for the judicious but for the special use of the most senseless ignorant sort'.

(4) Here is his apology for a repetition of essential truths: 'I like to hear a man dwell much on the same essentials of Christianity. For we have but one God, and one Christ, and one faith to preach; and I will not preach another Gospel to please men with variety, as if our Saviour and our Gospel were grown stale. This speaking the same things is a sign that a man hath considered what he speaks, and that he hath made it his own, and utters not that which accidentally falls in. And it is a sign that he is still of the same belief, and doth not change, and that he loves the Truth which he so much dwells upon, and that he looketh more at the feeding of mens souls and strengthening their graces, than at the feeding of their itching fancies, and multiplying their opinions. For it is the Essentials and common Truths (as I have often said) that we daily live upon as our bread and drink. And we have incomparably more work before us, to know these better and use them better, than to know more. The sea will afford us more water after we have taken out a thousand Tuns, than an hundred of those wels and pits from whence we never yet fetcht any. I speak not against the need of cloathing the same truth with a grateful variety in representing it to the world, nor against a necessary compliance with the diseases of some itching Novelists in order to the Cure, but only give you an account of this Publication, by him that had rather be charged with the greatest rudeness of stile than with the guilt of neglecting what he might have done for the saving of one soul'.

(5) Here is a passage which shows how well he knew and could describe what many another preacher has discovered. 'We are not the Teachers of a well ruled School, where learners are ranked into several Forms, that every one may have the teaching which is agreeable to the capacity; but must set open the Door to all that will crowd in . . . and there being as *various degrees of Capacity* as there are Men and Women, and consequently great *variety* and *Contrariety* of apprehensions, its easie *ab antecedente* to know what various reception we must expect. We cast out Doctrine almost as a Foot-ball is turned out among Boys in the Street, in some congregations. Few understand it, but everyone censureth it. Few come as Learners or teachable Disciples, but most come to sit as Judges on their Teachers words; and yet have neither the *Skill* or the *Patience* or the *diligence* which is necessary in a Just Tryal, to a righteous Judgment. But as our *words agree* or *disagree* with the former conceptions of every Hearer, so are they Judged to be wise or foolish, sound or unsound, true or false, fit or unfit. Few Sermons that I preach but one extolleth them, and wisheth they were Printed, and another accuseth them of some heinous fault. Some men are pleased with clearness and accurateness of Doctrine; and others account it *too high*, and say we shoot over the hearers Heads, and like nothing but the fervent *Application* of what they knew before. Most Hearers are displeased with that which they most need. If they err, they reproach that Doctrine as erroneous that would cure them; if they are guilty of any prevailing Distemper and sin, they take that Application to be injurious to them which would convince them, and save them from that guilt. Most are much pleased with plain and zealous reproof of sin; but it must be other men's sins and not their own. The poor love to hear of the evil of oppression and unmercifulness, of Pride, Fulness, and Idleness, and all the sins of the Rich. Subjects love to hear of their Rulers faults, and say, O this Man is no flatterer; he dares tell the greatest of their sins. But if they hear of their own, they take it for an injury. Rulers like a Sermon for submission and obedience, but how few love to hear of the evil of injustice and oppression, or pride and sensuality, or to read *Luke* 16, or 12, or *James* 5, or to hear of the necessity of Holiness, Jus-

tice and temperance, and of Death, and Judgment, and the Life to come? Every Sectary and Dogmatist delighteth to have his own Opinion cryed up, and his Party praised as the Chiefest Saints; but all that tendeth to the praise of those that he dissenteth from, and accounteth adversaries to the Truth, is distasteful to him, as complying with iniquity, and a strengthening of the Enemies of Christ; and all that uncharitableness which he expecteth from us against others, is as much expected by others as against him and such as he' (*Dying thoughts*, p. 103).

(6) Here, lastly, is a very impressive passage, extorted from him by the charge (of some Quakers) that he carried on his ministry for his own profit.

'Lest you should long too much for such profit I'll tell you some of mine. If I would have addicted myself to secular employments I might have lived possibly in Honour, in Riches and in health: for many are Colonels and men of great place in the world that had not so fair opportunities of rising as I . . . Some that have preached in the same Pulpit with me, have cast off their black coats, and put on Scarlet, and are become men of great wealth and Dignity. Law or Physick or Souldiery would have afforded a man Honors and Riches; but what get I in the Ministry? I'll tell you but the truth: constant study, Preaching, and all other labours, have utterly overthrown my health, and I know not one hard student and painful Preacher of many, but is languishing or sickly; yet though I am day and night full of pain, study I must, preach I must, I must visit the sick, instruct the ignorant, resolve the doubting, comfort the dejected and disquieted soul, admonish the scandalous and relapsed. As far as I am able, these must be done, and very much more, besides defending the truth against all wrangling Seducers; and when all this is done, what is my profit? Many a time heretofore, have I had the people secretly and openly reviling, slandering, and cursing me. If I do but gal a guilty conscience, I provoke their cruel hatred; much ado to bring a few sinners to the sense of sin, and the true knowledge of Christ; and when we think we have accomplished it, how many of them fall back? If there do but any seducer come in among them, what danger are they in of receiving their Delusions before the Truth can have time to take rooting in them? How easily are these *tossed up and down as children, and carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine*? And though it be not much that seducers have succeeded in my own Charge, yet it is so in many Others, to the grief of all that know and love them. In a word, between the obstinateness of the ungodly, the ignorance of the weak, and the pride, self-conceitedness and unruliness of Professors, the life of a Minister is so heavy a burden, and such a continual grief, that I confess from my heart, I have been many a time haunted by *Jonah's* temptation, to over-run Gods work and to put it off, as *Moses* and *Jeremy* would have done. We have flesh and blood as well as other men, for we are but men; and when in the time of temptation, I have hearkened to the flesh, this hath been the language of it – was not I born as free a man as others? Why must I then be tied up to this despised, hated, weary work? Why may I not take that course where I may have a fuller maintenance without grudging, as other men have? But that I must live with the grievances and repinings of others, as if I took the bread from their mouths! Where all that I receive is thought too much, and all that I give too little; where more is expected to be given back than I receive! Why must I sit from morning to night in consuming studies, or else be instructing and admonishing them that will hate me for it? Why must I live in continual pain and languishing, when other mens labours tend to their health? I must be groaning in my own sorrows, and weeping for the obstinacy and danger of others, when other men go pleasantly about their work; and when I have laboured for them night and Day, the thanks I must expect is to be hated and scorned by the ungodly, to be tired with the great unteachableness of the ignorant, to be grieved with the pride, unruliness and passions of Professors and by such as these Pamphleters – to be called Dog, and Devil and Bloodhound, for taking but my own, which never was theirs nor their forefathers; and for contradicting the silliest Seducers that speak the grossest falsehoods in the name of Gods Spirit.

'Such thoughts as these the flesh has too often suggested; so that I confess, had I but liberty to lay by this Calling, which you so reproach, my flesh would take it for the happiest hour that ever I saw. But do I approve of this, or grudge at my imployment and the disposal of my God? No, I bless the Lord daily, that ever he called me to this blessed work! It is but my flesh that repineth at it. God hath paid me for all these sufferings a thousand fold. O the sweetness of sacred studies and contemplations! They are the Recreations of my Spirit, though a weariness to the flesh! O the consolations that I have in the very opening his Gospel Mysteries, and in revealing the Hopes of the Saints, and the unseen glory of the Life to come! O how the Lord doth sweetly revive my own Faith and Love and Desire and Joy and Resolution and all Graces, whilst he sets me on those thoughts in my studies, and those Persuasions in my Preaching which tend to revive the Graces of my Hearers! O the sweet comfort that I have in the abundant success of my Labors, in the Conversion and Confirmation of souls, and in the Mortification and Vivification of my godly Friends! For it is not all that are the Discouragers before mentioned. Truly Gods work is most precious wages! Yea, even my sufferings for him are the inlets of my Joy! And my constant experience assureth me, that the dearer it costeth me to serve him, the more abundant will be the incomes of my Peace! and that no man shall ever be a loser by him! I would not therefore change my life for any of the greatest Dignities on earth. I had rather thus serve in the Gospel, and at the Altar of my Lord, and be called Dog and Divel, so he will but go on to bless my Labors, then to be bowed to, and honoured by all the world, and to be swelled with Riches, Titles, and Vain-glory to the utmost Greatness that the world can afford. I am willing to wait on God in this Work, and think my lines and lot well fallen. I am contented to consume my body, to sacrifice my Reputation to his Service, and to spend all that I have, and to be spent myself, for the soules of men – though the more I love, the less I may be beloved'.

APPENDIX I

THE BAXTER PEDIGREE

BAXTER's heir, William Baxter (1650–1723) – son of his cousin John – who became an Antiquary of considerable note, was much more keen about the 'family-tree' than Baxter himself; and satisfied himself that it sprang from a certain Popidius (Welsh pobydd = Baker or Baxter) of Montgomeryshire. Then, an early descendant settled at Bishop's Castle (Salop), whence in Henry VI's time (1422–61) John Popidius migrated to Shrewsbury; and there flourished exceedingly. He was four times Bailiff, and, as a devoted Yorkist, 'was granted by the Herald, what was a great honour in those times, the *augmentation*[1] of a Dolphin naiant argent in a dexter canton azure on his shield'! Thus the family received the stamp of gentility, if not nobility. The nobility (or a taste of it) came when his brother Roger, who carried on the main line, married a very illustrious lady, Elizabeth, eldest daughter and coheiress of the most noble Richard Paganus (Payne), Lord of Leighton (L'Aegtun). This was in the time of Henry VIII. One result was the cession to the Baxters by the Paynes of Eaton Constantine. William, son of Roger, who lived to be nearly a hundred, married Elizabeth, daughter of Roger Biest, a north countryman, Proctor of James, the last Abbot of Lilleshul. Their son, Richard, married Ann,[2] daughter of Richard called Forester, a secretary of the famous Bishop Bonner (1550–9). Roger, the second son of Richard and Ann, was the grandfather of William the Antiquary; while Richard, their elder son, was the father of our divine. William, therefore, was the latter's cousin first removed.

The preceding is condensed from the fragment of autobiography prefixed to 'opera posthuma' – or 'reliquiæ' – of William Baxter (1726). A translation of it (from the Latin with many useful notes, by J. E. Auden, M.A., has been published in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archæological* . . .

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[1] Before this the Arms were: Argent a bat Sable.

[2] Ann's brother was Anthony Forster of Cumnor, known as 'Tony-Fire-the-Faggott' because it was he (report said) who lighted the flames at the martyrdom of Bishops Ridley and Latimer at Oxford on October 16, 1555.

Society, vol. xlii., pp. 127–40; and is supplemented in the same number, by the Rev W. G. D. Fletcher, M.A., F.S.A., who quotes a corresponding pedigree of Baxter drawn up by the Rev J. B. Blakeway from Blakeway MSS. V. 41 in Bibl. Bodl. extended and enlarged. In bare outline it is as follows: –

John Baxter of Bishop's Castle
settled at Shrewsbury Temp. Henry VI

John Baxter = Alice
eldest son

Roger Baxter = Elizabeth, dau. and co-heir. of Richard Payne of Eaton Constantine

A dau. and heiress, married to — Barker of Haughmond

William Baxter = Elizabeth, dau. of Roger Beist of Atcham, bailiff to the Abbot of Lilleshull
living 1530

Richard Baxter of = Anne, dau. of Richard Forster of Sutton Madock, Secretary to Bishop Bonner.
Sutton Madock

Beatrice, dau. of Richard Adney of Rowton psh. of High Ercall, bapt. at High Ercall, 7 June, 1594, married there 29 Jany., 1614–15, died 10 May, 1635 or 1636
= Richard Baxter of Eaton Constantine, gent., bapt. at Sutton Maddock, 21 Oct., 1582, buried at Leighton, 13 Feb., 1662–3. Admon. at Lichfield. Inventory, 25 Feb., 1662–3
= Mary, dau. of Sir Thomas Hunkes, mar. in 1637–8, bur. at Leighton, 31 Aug., 1680 (or 6 July, 1683)

Roger Baxter = Jane, dau. of William ap John ap Morgan of Carnau, co. Montgomery.
of Alscot, psh. Wrockwardine, living 1640

Richard Baxter, only child, born at Rowton, 12 Nov., 1615, and bapt. at High Ercall, 19 Nov., 1615, died 8 Dec., 1691, and buried at Christ Church, Newgate St., 17 Dec.
= Margaret, youngest dau. of Francis Charlton of Apley Castle: Sheriff, 1626; bapt. at Wellington, 18 Sept., 1636; mar. 10 Sept., 1662, died 14 June, 1681; buried 17 June at Christ Church, Newgate Street

John Baxter of Llanllugan, co. Montgomery, buried there, 4 Jan., 1680–1
= Catherine Bolliver of Coit Talane

William, scholar and antiquary, 1650–1723
= Sarah, dau. of John Cartwright

Benjamin = Mary, dau. of Edward Cresset of Cotes, buried at Holgate, 25 Dec., 1674

William Baxter had two sons and two daughters. The elder son, Richard, resided at Eaton Constantine and married there, Elizabeth Ward of Leighton on December 2, 1728. He was admitted a burgess of Shrewsbury January 20, 1721 and lived till January 17, 1754. His wife died on January 28, 1781–2 and both were buried at Leighton. Their children numbered six, all born at Eaton Constantine, all buried at Leighton and all daughters, except William, the youngest who, also, became a burgess of Shrewsbury and died in November 1815, aged 77.

The family tree of the Baxters would seem, from the wills and extracts printed by Mr Fletcher (pp. 143–9) to have had many branches besides the main branch indicated above – or else the twigs of this must have been much more numerous than appears.

Not only Eaton Constantine and High Ercall and Sutton Maddock and Leighton, but also Wrockwardine, Sheinton, Atcham, Wroxeter, Cound, etc., are represented. Not the least interesting item is one which tells that Edward Baxter of Layton (Leighton) fetched a wife, Joyce Browne, from Kidderminster on June 26, 1660.

But one thing is noticeable – there is no light from any of these lists, or references, on the *Michael* Baxter (d. May 20, 1660) of whom Rev Michael Paget Baxter (Prophet Baxter) (1834–1910) claimed to be the eighth lineal descendant; and who is said to have been our Richard's uncle – elder brother of his father Richard. See *Life of M. P. Baxter*, p. 23.

APPENDIX 2

Appendix i. 1. Baxter's license to teach. 'Jacobi Littleton Episcopo Wigorniensi, Vicarii Generalis, literæ facultatem Richardo Baxtero, concedentes grammaticam docendi infra burgum de Dudley, dioc. Wigorn (December 18, 1638). (Parchment with label, but seal lost). Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol iv, f. 401^{a}.

2. Baxter's ordination certificate – 'Johannis (Thornborough) Wigorniensis Episcopi literæ notificantes se Richardum Baxterum ad ordinem diaconatus admisisse (December 23, 1638), *u.s.* f. 400^{a}. (It is endorsed, as exhibited to the Bishop's Visitor William Warmestry, on May 7, 1639.)

APPENDIX 3

Four letters dealing with Baxter's first settlement at Kidderminster:

(Baxter MSS. (Letters),
Vol. vi, f. 43^{a}
,, iii, f. 111^{a}
,, iii, f. 112^{a}.)

(1) March 20, 1640–1

To our worthy good friend and faithful preacher of God's Word Mr Baxter at Bridgnorth, present these

Worthy Sir,

These may certifie you That whereas Mr George Dance our Vicar hath condescended by an obligation of £500 to bind himselfe to give way and leave, that a godly learned preacher of Gods Word be chosen to be Lecturer and to permite and suffer him freely to preach in the Parish Church of Kidderminster without interruption or contradiction of himselfe or Curate, and allsoe to allow for the maintenance and encouragement of such a preacher or lecturer, the Sum̄e of threescore pounds per annum, and him to be elected and nominated by us whose names are subscribed and some others, we therefore having both heard a good account of yourselfe, and some of us having had experience of your abilities and godly conversation, would intreat you to take upon you this service and labour, and with what convenience you may to come over for your further approbation and tryall that satisfaction (soe neere as possible) may be given to all. Which we suppose would be very convenient in many Respects, is on Thursday next in the morning you would be here to exercise amongst us (it being the first day of the quarter specified in Mr Dance his covenant, and a day wherein is offered the advantage of a publique Assembly, and allso our Market day and allso a day wherein we desire a weekly lecture: all which conveniences doe cause us to present these our desires unto you and intreate your resolution herein by the bearer heareof, that soe we may give notis beforehand). Soe hoping that the Lord who hath opened this dore of entrance will allso direct your way unto us, we take our leave and are

Yours friends affectionately
desirous of you

Rich. Pitt
John Freeston
John Dolittle
×John Corbin
×Robert Greene
×Edward Richards
×Thomas Ware
×Edward Waldern
×Thomas Longmore
×Francis Bowyer
×Robert Whittell
×Abraham Plumbly
×Simon Lavvington
×Thomas Reade

(2) Number two is dated a day earlier (18th) and is in the same words – except for the omission of those within brackets. Less the first three, it is also subscribed by the same persons – in their own hand, whereas those names of letter No. 1 which I have marked with a cross are written by the copyist of both letters.

Further, No. 2 ends 'Your affectionate friends'; and between this and the first signature there is a sprawling note apparently to the effect that what ever expenses Baxter may incur shall be refunded. Baxter's reply is missing; but it said that he could not come for the day mentioned and proposed certain terms. This drew forth letter number three.

No. (3) undated.

Worthy Sir,

The tender affection of love you beare towards us and alsoe those seasonable lines you wrote to us in answer to our longing desires (which much rejoyced our hearts) give us an Invitation to wright a few lynes to you.

We are very cordially thankful to you for that you deny yourselfe of so many great tenders, and willingly accept of soe small a competency with us. We upon serious consultation with our friends, doe cheerfully with willingness subscribe our hands engaging ourselves for the performance thereof and to provide a house convenient for you and alsoe endeavour (to the utmost of our power) to make good the rest of the conditions specified in yor letter, earnestly desiring the enjoyment of you as soone as conveniently you can (if it may be, the first Sabbath in the New yeare).[1] Thus desiring the Lord to blesse you, to beare you up in the armes of his dearest love, we commit you to his gracious protection and ever remayne

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[1] I.e., First Sunday of April, 1641.

Your ingaged friends in all Christian
respects
John Corbin
Hugh Dickeridge
William Bowyer
Tho. Longmore
Tho. Winnerton
Henry Hunt
Thomas Bunt
Thomas Ware
Abraham Plimbley
Lawrence Pearsall
Tho. Read
Tho. Doolittle
John Cholmeley (?)
Edward Lyill
John Walle

Baxter's services on the first Sunday in April issued in an immediate resolution to invite him. As he puts it he 'preached one day' and was 'chosen nemine contradicente' – a form of expression suggestive of some neutrals.

Hereupon the feoffees and some representatives of the congregation at once (April 5) proceeded to announce their intention to present the 'call', as follows.

No. (4) dated April 5.

To all Christian people to whom these presents shall come greeting. Know yee we, some of the Parrishioners of the Parrish of Kidderminster in the County of Worcester, whose names are heere under written according to the Agreement of Mr George Dance our Vicar mentioned in the condition of one bond or obligation of the penall sum̄e of Five hundred Pounds heretofore entered into by the said Mr George Dance, and according to the true meaning of the said condition To have chosen, elected and nominated, and doe by these presents choose elect and nominate Mr Richard Baxter of Bridgnorth in the County of Sallop to be our preacher and Lecturer, and to preach unto us and the rest of our parrishioners in our Parrish Church and to instruct us out of the Word of God, which we cheerfully doe, in regard we have heard him preach divers tymes, and doe well approve him. And therefore we heartily desire the said Mr Baxter to accept the Place of Lecturer, and we doe by these presents request and desire the said Mr Dance, that he wil be pleased to give free consent, way and Liberty unto the said Mr Baxter, to preach in our Parrish Church of Kidderminster when and as often as to him the said Mr Baxter shall seeme meete, according to the Agreement aforesaid for Witnes whereof we have heereunto subscribed our Handes the fifte day of Aprill Anno Dm̄ 1641.

Daniel Dobyns – John Freeston – Richard Pitt – Adam Houghe – John Corbyn – John Doolittle – Robert Greene – Edward Richards – Thomas Ware – Edward Walderne – Francis Bowyer – Robert Whittell – Abraham Plumley – Thomas Longmore – Simon Harrington – Thomas Reade.

Feofees (16).

John Cholmeley
Edward Woodward
Signū Joh. Pearsall (*his sign*)
Simon Potter
Willm Sinde
Symon Dolittle
Nicholas Pearsall
Tho. Berriae
James Underhill
Signū Tho. B. Bellamy (*his sign*)
Francis Lindone

This, of course, was not the 'call' itself. That would be presented in a private letter of a more intimate character which (unfortunately) is missing. Nor have we Baxter's letter of acceptance.

APPENDIX 4

COVENTRY'S HONOURING OF BAXTER

In Baxter MSS. vol. vi, f. 121ª there is the following letter from the Mayor and Corporation of Coventry occasioned by the gift of his *Saint's Rest* and the dedication of its third part to the City. The date is June 9, 1651.

Reverend Sir,

Your learned and labourious Book, the *Saint's Everlasting Rest*, was presented to us by our Reverend Friend Mr Bryan.[1] Although extraordinary occasions – to express our thankfulness to you – have hitherto hindered, yet now we return you our hearty thanks for your great love and kind affection towards this city. And as you were pleased to dedicate some part thereof to the City of Coventry, so we have, for your honor and kind remembrance ordered it to be transferred yearly, among other books of like kind heretofore dedicated to us, in the annual Indentures from Mayor to Mayor. And lest we should appear to be unthankful to so worthy a friend we do by this bearer, Mr James Bryan,[2] present you with a small token of our Affection to you – a silver Colledge cup, having the Elephant (this City's arms) engraven thereon. Be pleased to accept hereof as a testimony of our kind love to you, desiring Almighty God to lend you longer life that you may add more Rest unto his Saints. Assuring you that upon all occasions you shall find us to be so.

Your affectionate and truly loving friends

Robert Bedford – Mayor
Samson Hopkins
Thos Basnet
John Rogerson
Henry Smith
Godfray Legg
Thomas Love
Matthew Smith
Samuel Snell
John Gilbert
George Elare (Clare?)

(*Autographs scattered across the page.*)

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[1] Dr John Bryan one of the Ministers of Coventry (d. 1676). His sons were John, Samuel and Noah – all (like himself) ejected Ministers. He had a brother named Gervase (or Jarvis) also one of the ejected. Perhaps

[2] *James* was another brother.

APPENDIX 5

BAXTER'S SECOND CALL TO KIDDERMINSTER

(undated but about June, 1647).

(Baxter MSS. vol i, f. 213^{a}, 214^{a})

Worthy Sir – Our Place being now vacant and we destitute of faithfull labourers in the work of the Ministry from the experiences we have had of Gods blessing uppon your labours formerly amongst us, doe with mutall consent make choyse of you for our Minister to preach the Gospell amongst us and therefore doe humbly and earnestly entreate you to put on the bowells of compassion towards us (being as sheepe without a Shepherd) to returne unto us before the next Sabbath to bestow your labours amongst us who love and honour you, and shall to our power be ready to afford you all due encouragement and assistance in the work of God. In hope of a cheerful assenting Answer, we remayne

Yor trulie affectionate friends
Mr Richard Hunt, Bailiffe
,, William Browne, Justice
,, John Radford
,, John Pearsall
,, John Freeston
,, John Doolittle
,, Samuel Potter
,, William Synes
,, Nicholas Pearsall
,, Tho. Berrie
,, Edward Baynam
,, Nathaniell Brooksbee

(*In same hand.*)

(*In another hand.*)

Francis Lindon
Tho Bellamie
Tho Coles
John Ellesmere
Edward Hill
Tho. Pearson

Tho. Best
Tho. Launder
John Raynolds
Tho. Ware
Richard Lambe
John Cooper

John Peyton
Gilbert Launder
Tho. Howseman
Will. Hayward
John Davies
Will. Freeston
John Pearson
Francis Bowyer
Richard Hemming
Mr Tho. Burton
Mr Silvanus Lane
Mr John Corbin
Hugh Diskeridg
Tho. Longmore
Edward Waldern
Gregorie Downam
Nicholas Denny
John Low
Richard Payton
Richard Jones
David Rogers
Richard Hall
Humphrie Wilde
George Pen
Lancelot Harrington
John Harrington
Will. Bowyer
Barthollomew Perryns
Tho. Lowell
Richard Chessnam
Will. Butcher
Edward Foxall
Tho. Wannderton
John Millare
Gilbert Wheeler
Henry Wheeler
Will. Lane
Tho. Lawrence
Tho. Robinson
Ezekiel Butcher
Will. Mills
Francis Mills
George Joel
Richard Willetts
John Foxall
Francis Hill
Thomas Blunt
Tho. Hornblower Sen^{r}
Tho. Hornblower Jun^{r}
Samuel Handley
Henry Hunt
William Doelittle
John Wall
Tho. Payne
Anthony Harris
Will. Moumfort
Tho. Smith
Richard Dimont
Nicholas Rooke
John Nutt
Tho. Greaves
Tho. Pagett
Will. Bourne
James Talbott
Will. Best
John Field
Tho. Hunt
John Underhill
Edward Hill
Hugh Price
Nicholas Sure
Richard Baker
James Henley
John Browne
John Mandly
Edward Thomason
George Greene
Robert Mayes.

(*A third hand.*)

John Greene
Nicholas Powell
James Tarbox
Rich. Radford
Tho. Webbe
Widdow Uffmore
Widdow Greene
Widdow Read
Widdow Baker
Widdow Doolittle
Widdow Griffin
Widdow Richards
Widdow Field
Widdow Pooler
Widdow Wheeler
Edward Pitt
Tho. Nicholls
Anthony Doelittle
Tho. Hawkes
Edward Hawkes
William Smith
Michael Bettinson
Will. Charles
Will Aston
Walter Wilde
Henry Malpas
John Heth
Richard Charles
Richard Patten
John Mills
Tho. Poole
Henry Baker
Edward Mountfort
Tho. Norly
Henry Webster
Edward Patten
Edward Lake
Edward Narton (?)
Edward Hill
Edward Syner
John Yates
Jym. Harrington
Henry Pitt
Robert Whittall
Tho. Syner
Richard Jones
Sam. Whittall
John Hunt

(*At this place the page has been torn and pasted up.*)

Edmund Reade
Russell Haskins
William Pitt
William Norbary
Symon Plymer
Peter Hill.

THE SOULDIERS

Abraham Plumley
Lawrence Pearsall
Thomas Read
Thomas Doelittle
Francis Dolman
John Carpenter
John Plumley
Edward Chamberlaine
Nicholas Freeston
Thomas Freeston
Lawrence Freeston
Francis Carter
Abraham Whittle
John Brettell
John Potter
Rich. Williams

Ed. Woodward
John Yorks
Robert Newport
John Griffin
John Harris (?)
Charles(?)
Tho. Wilkes
(*Here the paper is broken.*)
Joseph Whittle
Paul Whittle
Griffin Haddock
Tho. Crunishley
Will. Browne
Will Harriss
John Poole
Ed. Clime

Walter Spittle
John Holes
John Freeston
John Greene
Will. Griffin
Rich. Baker
Walter Millard
Will. Jones
Symon Doolittle
John Doolittle
Humphree Doolittle
Humphree Tilsley
Will. Nicholls
Edward Asson
Nicholas Wheeler.[1]

(*Same as third hand.*)

He. Yongmen[2]
John Pit
John Pearsall
Henry Pearsall
John Browne
Tho. Bellamie
Ed. Baynam
Phillip Doolittle
William Doolittle
Will Grinnall
Richard Agborough
Josias Cowper.
Robert Bellamy
John Henly
Richard Kennet
Nicholas Wignell
Tho. Doolittle

Tho. Yeats
Nich. Spender
John Moumfort
John Gilbarts
Richard Warham
Daniel Wall
James Pit
Ed Griffin
Tho. Ferrington
Will Cheltnam
Robert Brooks
John Rylands
Ed. Browne
Richard Barker
Will. Read
John Hill
Henry Malpas.

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[1] The Soldiers names are all written in the same, (a fourth) comparatively clear, and educated, hand.

[2] I am in doubt whether this may not mean 'the young men' and so be descriptive of those that follow.

APPENDIX 6

THE STATE OF HIS PARISH IN 1658

There is an illuminating passage on this point (in '*Confirmation and Restauration*' . . . pp. 157–165) which I had not come across when the text (*supra* p. 134) was written.

He introduces it by the remark that he would never have come to know the real state of things had he not 'set upon the duty of Personal instruction'. Then his eyes were opened. For he found that the 'whole parish consisteth of all these sorts following':

(1) 'Among eight hundred Families there are about five hundred persons, such as the vulgar call precise, that are rated to be serious Professors of Religion (or perhaps somewhat more). These live in Unity, and seem to me to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness; and are of as peaceable, harmless, humble Spirits, and as unanimous without inclination to sects, or Ostentation of their parts, as any people I know'.

(2) 'Besides these, there are some of competent Knowledge and exterior performances, and lives so blameless, that we can gather from them no certain Proofe, or violent Presumption that they are ungodly, or that their Profession is not sincere. So many of these, joining with the rest as make about six hundred, do own their Church-membership, and consent to live under so much of Church-Order and Government, as unquestionably belongeth to Presbyters to exercise, and to be my Pastoral Charge'.

(3) 'Besides these, there are some that are tractable and of willing minds, that by their expressions seem to be ignorant of the very Essentials of Christianity; which yet I find to have obscure conceptions of the truth, when I have condescendingly[1] better searcht them, and helped them by my enquiries'.

(4) 'Some there are that are of competent understandings and of lives so blameless, that we durst not reject them; but they hold off themselves, because they are taught to disown our Administrations. For all that, we give liberty to all that in tollerable things do differ'.

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[1] i.e. stepping down to their level – with no hint of patronage.

(5) 'Some there are that are secret Heathens, believing with *Aristotle* that the world was from Eternity, making a scorn of Christ, and *Moses*, and Heaven and Hell, and Scripture, and Ministers, and all Religion; thinking that there is no Devill, no Immortality of the Soul, or Everlasting Life'.

'But this they reveale only in secret'; and 'for the hiding of their Minds, they will hear and urge us to baptize their Children, and openly make the most Orthodox Confessions, and secretly deride it when they have done, as I can prove'.

(6) 'Many there are that have tollerable knowledge, and' (yet) 'live in some notorious, scandalous sins. Some in gross covetousness, and these will not be convinced; some in common drunkenness, and these will confess their faults, and promise amendment a hundred times over, and be drunk within a few daies againe; and thus have spent the most part of their lives: *some in as constant tipling, drinking as great a quantity but bearing it better away:*[1] some in ordinary swearing, cursing, ribaldry, whoredomes sometimes. Many in neglect of all Family duties, and the Lords Day; and some in hateful bitter scorns of Prayer, holy Conference, Church-Order, and holy living, and the people that use it; sometimes rising up in tumults against the Officers that endeavour to punish a drunkard, or Sabbath breaker, and rescuing them, and seeking the ruine of the Officers'.

(7) 'Some there are that are of more tractable disposition but really know not what a Christian is; that heare us from day to day – yea, some few of them learn the words of the Catechism – and yet know not almost any more than the veryest Heathen in *America*'.

'One of about foure score yeares of age', for example, 'thought Christ was the Sunne that shineth in the Firmament, and the Holy Ghost the Moone'.

(8) 'Many there be that joyne this Heathenish ignorance and wicked obstinacy together; hating to be instructed; scorning to come neer me, to be taught, and to be told of their sinne, when they come. They will rail at us bitterly behind our backs, if we will not let them have their own will and way about the Sacraments and all Church-Affairs; but they will not submit

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[1] N.B. (Italics mine.)

to that Teaching that should bring them to know what Christ and Christianity is.'

(9) 'Some there be that are of tollerable knowledg and no Drunkards, nor Whoremongers that the world knoweth of, but of more plausible lives, and have some formes of Prayer in their families; but yet live in idle or tipling company, or spend their lives in vanity and hate more a diligent serving of God, and heavenly life, than the open Drunkards do. These make it their work to possess people with a hatred of strict Professors and of our Churches and Administrations, and to that end get all the books that are written for admitting all to the Lords Supper, that they can light of . . .' (not many of these in Kidderminster but too many in some 'Neighbour Parishes' to the grief of their godly Ministers).

(10) 'Another sort there are that are deeply possessed with a conceit that God having determined before we are borne, whether we shall be saved or not, it is in vaine to strive; for if we be predestinated we shall be saved whatever we do, and if we be not, we shall not, whatever we do . . . and thus by misunderstanding some Texts of Scripture, and abusing some Truths of God, they are hardened in ungodliness; and they will not so much as promise Reformation, nor promise to use the means, because they say, they cannot tell whether God will put it into their hearts; and it is all as he will'.

(11) 'Besides these, there is (sic?) one or two honest, ignorant Professours, that are turned *Anabaptists*, and joyne with the Church of them in the next Parish (Bewdley?)'

(12) 'And some *Papists* are among us; and whether only that stay from the Assemblies, I cannot say'. . . .

'Of these twelvesorts of People this Parish is composed, which I therefore mention that the State of our Parishes may be truly known, while others are compared with this'.

'I know not a congregation in *England* that hath in it Proportionably so many that fear God' (p. 157).

What then must the rest have been like!

APPENDIX 7

COPY OF BAXTER'S 'SUBMISSION' TO CHARLES II

(June 1, 1660)

In persuance of the gracious Declaration of his most excellent Majesty and our sovereign Lord Charles the Second by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, defender of the Faith etc, given under his Majesties sign manual and privie signet at his court at Breda, the 4th–14th of April last; and, uppon the first of May instant, ordered by the Comons House to be printed and published, I Richard Baxter, of the Borough of Kederminster in the County of Worcester, Clerke (though I am not conscious of any crime committed against his Royall Majetcy yet lest I should be ignorantly culpable and lyable to the calumnies of enemies) doe, with most humble and hearty thanks, lay hold uppon his Majestys said free and generall Pardon by the said Declaration granted. And I doe hereby publickly declare that I doe lay hold uppon his Majesty's Grace and favor; and that I am, and will continue, his Majesty's loyall and obedient subject. In testimony whereof I have herewith subscribed my name this first of June in the twelfth yeare of his Majesty's Reigne one thousand six hundred and sixty.

RICHARD BAXTER.

This Declaration was publikely made and subscribed the day and yeare above said by the above named Richard Baxter before me

Sil(vanus) Taylor, Justice of the
Peace of the citie of Westminster.

Taylor was his 'most entire and dear friend Colonel Sylvanus Taylor' with whom he lodged during his visit to London early in 1644; to whom he addressed his 'confutation of a Dissertation for the Justification of Infidels' on March 8, 1653–4; and whom he had known (as we learn from this address) since about 1637. He was thus a friend of his youth and one greatly beloved. Yet that he was not politically at one with Baxter seems clear from a letter to him (in reply to Baxter's of September 17) dated November 1, 1656, in which he gives his reasons for supporting 'the present powers' as from God: and lays down the doctrine that though 'Government is of Divine right' it is 'left to the election of the people', in whom 'all right of humane laws' is vested etc.[1] But the two came together in their acceptance of the restoration.

Taylor was born at Harley (Shropshire), two and a half miles from Little Wenlock and not much more from Eaton Constantine. He died in 1678 (Hulbert's *History of Shropshire*, vol. ii, p. 131).

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[1] Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. vi, ff. 166–72.

APPENDIX 8

THREE LETTERS TO BAXTER FROM KIDDERMINSTER

(1) No. 1 undated, but apparently before August 1, 1660

(Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. vi, ff. 24^a, 25^b)

Endorsed 'To the Reverend our much esteemed friend Mr Richard Baxter minister of the Gospell this present in London'. 'Leave this with Mr Francis Tytan at the three Daggers over ag't St Dunstans Church in Fleet Street to be delivered as abovesaid'.

Reverend and Most beloved Sir,

Although the frequency of our neighbours going and returninge hath given us opportunities of hearing of your competent Health, to our great comfort; and your remembrance of us in your letters testified your respects to us, yet because wee are not ignorant of the multitude of your important imploiments wee were the more remisse to this converse least wee should unnecessarily add unto your business. But now (we) think meet thus to present you with our respects; and were you willing to heare, it shoulde (as we have just cause) professe what wee owe; and should wee say EVEN OUR OWNESELVES we should not exceed our warrant. But beare with us in assuring you that wee look at it as duty to own you as the crown of our rejoycing and our Joy. Had we answered your pretious pains wee might have been yours in the day of the Lord Jesus which great Shepherd of his sheep, hath comfortably provided for us in your absence, especially by the profitable labours of good Mr Waldern; yet are wee very apprehensive of the need of your presence, especially in this Juncture of affaires, for however our danger is not so great by Seducers, as when by Gods mercy wee enjoyed your personall inspection especially then needful, yet have the floods of ungodliness made us afraid. And, therefore, if the work of your great master require your further attendance therein in the place you now are, wee hope and beg for a larger share in your prayers that wee may be kept blameless in the midst of a prophane and crooked generation among whom we live, that so your coming to us (which we most earnestly desire) may be with Joy and not with griefe:

which will be to us unprofitable; and that this to us uncomfortable – wee hope to others profitable – interruption may quicken us to prize and profit by your pastorall performances over us and with us, which to us will be refreshing and to you (wee know) not grievous and to many an occasion of glorifying God in us and for us, who dayly pray for you, and, however unworthy wee are of it, wee earnestly desire the continuance of your tendernes and relation to

Your most engaged friends and Neighbours

Tho. Doelittle	Simon Potter
Edward Butler	Nicholas Pearsall
Philip Doelittle	Tho. Hunt
Nevill Simmons	Lawrence Pearsall
Edward Chamberlain	Will Mountfort
Abraham Plimley	John Allen.

(2) No 2, August 2, 1660

(*Ibid.*, vol. vi, f. 70ab)

Endorsed 'To the Reverend our much valued Pastor Mr Richard Baxter, these'

Reverend and most dearly Beloved,

Whatever the workings of our hearts have been for your returne unto us long ere this, yet have we been almost (if not altogether) silent, apprehending your singular usefulnes in that Place. We have shared indeed in the common benefits of your labours there, but have lost those peculiar advantages we formerly enjoyed. We adore Gods dispensations in his Goodnes and severities, he having diminished us and enriched others. And although, through rich mercie, we have not bin without those sweet and pious helps (especially by Mr Waldern) as might make the toung of the dumb to speake, yet are we very sensible of our want of your personall guidance, especially in this Juncture, when we have so much cause to suspect a storm either to swallow us (we being without our vigilant and tender Pastor) or so to divide us as may cause great thoughts of heart. For enquiry hath bin made of the Churchwardens for the common prayer booke by such as formerly did, – and we believe (if there be opportunity) will again, – make use of it, with its appurtenances; and though we conceive nothing is so likely to impede it as your presence, which (notwithstanding the pantings of our souls for it) we cannot so suddenly expect as our emergent necessity require, in regard the tyme of your attendance on His Majestye is so nigh, yet wee most earnestly importune you that nothing in the world (except absolute necessity) may one day retarde your coming – which we hope and pray we may so improve as that it may be with Joy and not with griefe, which wil be unprofitable to us. And that in the meane tyme you will not onely help us by your prayers; but as a further testimony of your (we hope) indissoluble pastorall relation, you would afford us timely and full directions for o^{vr} unanimous and regular behaviour in the worship and service of our great Lord and Master, that instead of the songs of the sanctuary there may not be howling, so that we may be kept harmless in the midst of a perverse generation and so be preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus, unto whom we commend you and intreat that you will commend us, as you tender the soules of

Your most affectionate friends

Albard Moadllard
Thomas Potter
Will Chines
James Walker
John Hill
Elish. Arch
William Hayward
Richard Potter
Richard Hemmings
Thomas Reade
Robour Hayes
Tho. Doolittle
William Reade
Edward Butler
John Brettall
John Reynolds
William Hayward

James Hinley
William Bransell
Hen. Wheeler
Richard Dinvents (?)
William Horne Sen^{r}
William Doelittle
Thomas Ballamy
John Radford
Phil. Doelittle
Thomas Perkes
Edward Forrest (?)
Edward Chamberlain
Abraham Plimley
Thomas Hunt
Lawrence Pearsall
John Pearsall[1]
Thomas Ware

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[1] See p. 112 *supra.*

Will Mountfort
John Lymore
Thomas Dakine Sen^{r} (?)
Nicholas Pearsall
Francis Lindon
Henry Jackson
Thomas Taylor
Henry Pearsall
Edmund Spencer
Edward Woodward
Edmund Reade
Will Pouell.

Kidderminster August 2, 1660.

(3) No 3, January 28, 1661–2

(*Ibid.*, vol. v, f. 142^{a})

Reverend and most dearly Beloved,

Your indefatigable dilligence in your Ministry and unparalleled liberalitie for divers yeares past hath sufficiently manifested your tendernes of us, yet it is no small addition to our comfort that you are pleased to own us as your charge, notwithstanding your present sufferings for our sakes; and to continue your care of us in your reasonable Instructions, and distributions of your love tokens to us, which we thankfully accept. Whatever the Instruments are which the Almighty makes use of for our correction, by this violent separation of you from us, sure we are that God is righteous. Our lamentable non-proficiency under the rich enjoyments by your pastorall inspection hath justly provoked the Lord to lay us almost as low as Hell who were formerly exalted as high as Heaven. And who are wee that wee should say unto Him what doest thou? For wee know there is just cause; wee stick fast in the mire and (which is worse) yet feele no ground, beeing scattered as sheep upon the mountains, without our Sheppard, so that wee are a wonderment unto some, and a scorne and derision to many about us.[1] But as we can foresee the end of those that trouble us, so doe wee expect that all the obloquies shall be wiped of, from your and our eyes, when the day of restitution cometh. Bee not weary therefore of well doinge and of sufferinge for well doeing: for in due time you shall reap if you faint not. Meanwhile (most dear Sir) follow on those your encouraginge exhortations by your fervent prayers that your gloryings in us may not bee in vaine, but that wee may bee kept by the power of God, through faith, unto Eternall Salvation. These are the breathings and pantings of the souls of

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[1] See p. 208 *supra*.

Your engaged friends
John Lymore
John Allen
John Pearsall[1]

Nicholas Pearsall – Thomas Ware – Tho. Hunt – Lawrence Pearsall – Thomas Bellamy – Abr. Plimley – Will. Mountfort – Thomas Reade – Tho. Baldwin – Henry Jackson – Phil. Doelittle – John Hill – John Hill Junior – John Brettell.

Kederminster This 28 of January, 1661.

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[1] See p. 112 *supra*.

APPENDIX 9

After 1662 Baxter did not consider it safe or kind to write directly to Kidderminster; but in 1681 (for a few months) the persecution of Nonconformists was relaxed: and he at once made use of the opportunity. He was specially moved to do so, perhaps, by the death of his wife in June; and, certainly, by the recent passing of many old Kidderminster friends. The letter here quoted from appears to have been his last – unless we count the printed message with which he prefaced his Farewell Sermon (see Appendix 10).

The date 1681 is fixed by the remark that it is twenty years since he left them (1661).

As the letter is long and much of it taken up with his customary exhortations, there is no need to quote more than the opening paragraphs and part of the last.

They disclose the unexpected fact that he preached a farewell Sermon in the house of James Boucher at Wannerton; and also afford a welcome proof of a loving agreement between the then Vicar (Mr White) and the Nonconformist Ministers Messrs Baldwin and Sarjeant.

BAXTER'S LAST LETTER TO HIS KIDDERMINSTER FRIENDS

(About 1681)

(Baxter MSS., vol. iv, ff. 232–3^{b})

Dear Friends,

'The remembrances of the years of mercey which God vouchsafed me among you is pleasant to me, yea, it is the pleasantest part of all my life in the world. I do with pleasure think of Dudley, where I first preached occasionally, because of the great congregations of a willing poor people that used there to crowd for instruction; and I do with pleasure remember the liberty which I had at Bridgnorth by means of the great Priveleges of the place in times of prelaticall violence. I do with much thankfulness remember the safety, quietness and mercyes of many sorts which I, and some of you, enjoyed at Coventry while the nation round about was in warre; and the mercifull preservations we had in those unpleasing times.

But the thought of my comforts among you is sweeter to me than all, because my successes were nowhere so great. It comforteth me to think from what a state of riotous profaneness and ignorance your town is changed, and how commonly now the fear of God prevaileth, and how few if any there be now that oppose it, and that you can reproach the prayerless and contemners of godliness with the charge of singularity as such were wont to do the godly. It comforteth me to remember how many upright souls are allready departed in peace, and safely arrived at the desired rest, having fought a good fight and finished their course; and now enjoy the crown of righteousness. It comforteth me to remember how willingly you received the word of truth; how diligently the ablest of you were my helpers; how peaceably you all lived without any schism, or any separated meeting, or any erroneous sect (unless two or three infidels and three or four drunkards might be called sectaries); and how all the attempts of Anabaptists, Quakers etc never, to my knowledge, prevailed to the perverting of any among you, though we gave them leave publickly to dispute for their cause. It rejoiceth me to think how, by your concord and freedom from heresy and schism, living in love and Unity, your influence confuted those that would now persuade the ignorant that there was nothing but Schism and confusion in those times; and how much your leading example did to further piety and agreement in the town and country round about; especially your common submission to catechising and personall conference and instruction, when almost all the Town came willingly to my house and the Parish received Mr Serjeant to theirs; and that in all things you were specially exemplary in humility, and none of you ever invaded the ministry or went beyond the duty of your place. As also how willingly many hundreds of you submitted to Church discipline and in what comfortable order we did live. But it yet more comforteth me to remember what society I then had with humble, loving, peaceable painfull Ministers of Christ; how lovingly and comfortably we mett and converst together; how readily through the country' (county?) 'they consented first to oure association and concord for the exercise of so much discipline as the Episcopall, Presbyterian and Independents were agreed in; and, afterwards, all to join in personall conference with, and catechising or instructing of, all their people that consented.

How free those ministers were from all heresy, schism, contention and difference with one another; never engaging themselves to any faction or dividing party, but holding communion with all true Christians on the terms of primitive simplicity, purity and love! And it comforteth me to hear of the patience and fidelity of those of you that yet survive, and also of your own constancy, and that piety among you doth rather increase than decay. These being much of my comfort you cannot think that I forget you, as I am confident I am not forgotten by you in your prayers, the benefits of which I am persuaded I have largely been partaker of. I parted not from you willingly nor without necessity. I offered the Lord Chancellor Hyde, when he offered me a Bishoprick, to accept thankfully of leave to preach to you for nothing under your late ignorant Vicar as his Curate; but Bp Morley would not consent. I had yet staid among you had not you and I been satisfied that you were like to be ruined for my sake had I not departed. And God that sent me knows why he did it; which, since, by twenty years comfortable experience[1] – though among some accusations and persecutions – I have found was for my own and others good. And I *many years forbore so much as to write any letters to you* because of the jealousys of Malice here, which would have reported that I did it to disaffect you to the prelates or to the Government and Orders of the Church: as they intercepted and sent up hither to the Rulers a letter written to my *own Mother-in-law with you*,[2] which the Lord Chancellor returned to me with shame when he saw the contents.

But now, after many years wearisome (but tolerable) pains and languishing, finding, by the increase of my disease and natural decay and disability through age to resist as formerly, that my time here is like to be but short, I have often been thinking with what counsell to shew my love and thankfulness to you and its like, to bid you all Farewell . . .' 'I am glad to hear that you lovingly join together in the public Congregation. I am censured by some for hearing in and communicating with, my Parish Church. Remember that I privately (at James Boucher's House,[1] being denyed leave in public) preacht my farewell sermon to you on David's words "Bring back the ark of God into the city etc',[2] and foreseeing your temptation, persuaded you not to forsake the public assembly for the Liturgyes or people's faults, but yet not to own an intolerable minister. God hath now given you an able and pious man. Take him and Mr Baldwin and Mr Serjeant conjunct for your teachers and guides. All three lovingly agreeing, and never needlessly withdrawing from each other, will do more than one. Separate from no Christian further than he separateth from Christ or forceth sin on you . . .'

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[1] Therefore 1681.

[2] So she and Baxter, Senr., went on living at Kidderminster; but the latter died (at Eaton Constantine?) in February, 1663, and was buried at Leighton (see p. 291 *supra*).

[1] Wannerton.

[2] 1 Chronicles xiii. 3.

APPENDIX 10

In 1683 while Baxter was 'turning up the rubbish' of his 'old Papers' he came across the sermon which he had prepared for his farewell utterance in St Marys twenty-two years before. He recalled how he had intended to send it at the time, but durst not for fear of raising 'more enmity against' his old friends by his 'converse with' them; and so giving colour to the suspicion that he was encouraging them in disobedience to the new Church-order. He sends it now as his 'special farewell' – with thoughts of his approaching end, and a 'craving' for their continued prayers, and with loving and thankful remembrance of all they had been to him.

The text is John xvi. 22: 'And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoyce, and your Joy no man taketh from you'. It extends to forty-two rather closely printed pages (8 mo) but 'much of the last sheet', he says – 'was added to the Sermon after I came from you'. This may mean that he added the last six or seven pages, which are concerned with directly personal references. Not a few of these are common to nearly all his Kidderminster letters, but some are peculiar to this – e.g.:

'I rejoyce that your frequent meetings in your Houses – spent only in Reading, Repeating your Teachers Sermons, Prayer and Praise to God – have had none of those effects which the Conventicles of proud Opinionators, and self-conceited Persons use to have; and which have brought even needful converse, and godly communication, into suspicion at least with some, that argue against the abuse'.

The reference here manifestly is to the private meetings held or supervised by Messrs Baldwin and Sarjeant since 1661; and what he goes on to say is no less manifestly a reference to the whole period from 1641 to the time of writing 1683: 'Yea, I rejoyce that hereby so much good hath been done by you. You have had above Forty years experience of the great benefit of such well ordered Christian converse; increasing knowledge; quickening holy desires; prevailing with God for marvellous if not miraculous answers of your earnest prayer; keeping out errors and sects'.

The following is an important historic note on his relation to the 'Solemn League and Covenant' (1643) 'and the Engagement' (1650): 'I am glad that you were kept from taking' these, 'and all consent to the change of the constituted Government of this Kingdom. I took the Covenant myself, of which I repent, and I'll tell you why: I never gave it but to one Man (that I remember) and he professed himself to be a Papist Physician newly turned Protestant, and he came to me to give it him. I was persuaded that he took it in false dissimulation, and it troubled me to think what it was to draw multitudes of men by carnal interest so falsely to take it; and I kept it and the Engagement from being taken in your Town and Countrey' (County). At first it was not imposed but taken by Volunteers; but, after that, it was made a test of such as were to be trusted or accepted. Besides the illegality, there are two things that cause me to be against it. (*a*) That Men should make a meer dividing engine and pretend it a means of Unity. We all knew at that time when it was imposed that a great part, if not the greatest, of Church and Kingdom were of another mind, and that as Learned and Worthy Men were for Prelacy as most the World had (such as *Usher*, *Morton*, *Hall*, *Davenant*, Brownrigg etc): and to make our terms of Union to be such as should exclude so many and such Men, was but to imitate those Church Dividers and Persecutors who, in many Countries and Ages, have still made their own Impositions the engines of Division by pretence of Union. And it seemeth to accuse Christ, as if he had not sufficiently made us *terms* of Concord, but we must devise our own Forms as necessary thereto.

(*b*) And it was an imposing on the Providence of God, to tye ourselves by Vows to that as unchangeable which *we* knew not but God might after change, as if we had been the Masters of his Providence. No Man then knew but that God might so alter many circumstances as might make some things sins that were then taken for duty, and some things to be duty which then past for sin; and when such changes come, we that should have been content with Gods Obligations do find ourselves ensnared in our own rash Vows.

And I wish that it teach no other Man the way of dividing

Impositions, either to cut the Knot or to be even with the Covenanters'.

As in all his Letters his exhortation to 'maintain Union and Communion with all true Christians on Earth' is urgent. Especially, 'if God give you a faithful or a tolerable publick Minister be thankful to God, and love, honour, and encourage him; and let not the Imperfections of the Common Prayer make you separate from his Communion. Prejudice will make all Modes of Worship, different from that which we preferr, to seem some heinous sinful crime; but humble Christians are most careful about the frame of their own Hearts, and conscious of so much faultiness in themselves and all their service of God, that they are not apt to accuse and aggravate the failings of others, especially in matters which God has left to our own determination.

Whether we shall pray with a Book or without, in divers Short Prayers or one long one; whether the People shall sing Gods praise in Tunes, or speak it in Prose etc is left to be determined by the general Rules of Concord, Order, and Edification. Yet do not withdraw from the Communion of Sober, godly Nonconformists, though falsely called Schismaticks by others'. This Christian common sense went far to delay that organized separation from the Parish church which came at last; and its application is still widely needed.

There is one short passage near the beginning of the sermon which I should like to quote: 'How earnestly do we now wish that we had done much more? That I had preached more fervently and you had heard more diligently, and we had all obeyed God more strictly, and done more for the Souls of the ignorant, careless, hardened sinners that were among us? It is just with God that so dull a preacher should be put to silence, that could ever speak without fears and fervent importunity to impenitent sinners, when he knew that it was for no less than the saving of their Souls, and foresaw the Joys which they would lose, and the torment which they must endure, if they repented not. With what shame and sorrow do I now look back upon the cold and lifeless Sermons which I preached? and upon those years neglect of the duty of private instructing of your families before we set upon it orderly and constantly?

Our destruction is of ourselves! Our undervaluings and neglects have forfeited our opportunities. As good Melancthon was wont to say, *In vulneribus nostris proprias agnoscimus pennas*. The arrow that wounded us was feathered from our own wings'.

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